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Kortum Narratives
on Captain Klebingat;
also,

Fred Klebingat on various subjects

↳ Kortum, Karl

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Captain Fred K. Klebingat was born near Kiel, Germany, in 1889. When young Fred decided on a seafaring career, his father got him a job in the Bremen full-rigged ship D.H. WATJEN. He rounded Cape Horn in the dread winter of 1905 when ice pushed unusually far north from the Antarctic and gales were at their worst. The well-handled WATJEN fared better than other ships; the saga of the BRITISH ISLES that year, with men injured, washed overboard, and losing limbs to frostbite was set forth by Captain H.S. Jones in the memorable book, *The Cape Horn Breed*. Fred Klebingat was in Pisagua, Chile, when the BRITISH ISLES limped in.

"I realized at an early date that there must be some seafaring going on where one did not have to round Cape Horn in the middle of the Southern winter. . . ." Captain Klebingat wrote in later years. He found it on the Pacific Coast in lumber schooners and barkentines and rose to command, although his first trip as captain was from Kobe to Manila in an exotic old Dutch bark, teak over iron ribs, with a cargo of empty gin bottles and carboys of acid on deck. "Reckless Ross" Millman, the first man to ride a motorcycle around the inside of a barrel, traveled as passenger (his cycle and barrel were in the hold)—he had to get to Manila by carnival time. That was in 1918; in 1919 Captain Klebingat took command of the four-masted schooner MELROSE and continued in her until the mid-twenties; the MELROSE was the last regular South-seaman out of San Francisco, carrying lumber to Fiji and Tonga and returning with copra from Rotuma, Tonga, Niuafoou (Tin Can Island), and Niuatobutabu. The Captain subsequently spent many years as master of large schooner yachts in South Sea voyaging, commanded Liberty ships and tankers during World War II in both the Atlantic and Pacific, and, in 1969, at the age of eighty, skippered the motorship COOS BAY in the coastwise lumber trade.

A Memoir about Capt. Fred Klebingat

by

Karl Kortum

Capt. Fred Klebingat died at the Bay View Hospital in Coos Bay, Oregon early on Sunday morning, March 31, 1985. He was 95 years old.

Captain Klebingat was one of a small band of survivors -- most of them living in this country and Europe -- who commanded square-rigged ships. On the basis of the record, he was the most eloquent of these survivors. His writings took the form of letters and papers and answers to questions asked of the National Maritime Museum, San Francisco; an annual recollection of a Christmas at sea on a deepwater sailing ship or a South Sea schooner or a World War II Liberty ship or on other craft published as a series of booklets by that organization; a collection of these stories published as a book, "Christmas at Sea" by the Bernice P. Bishop Museum of Honolulu; and a booklet, "Memories of the Audiffred Building and the Old City Front," which constitutes the best short description of the old San Francisco waterfront published in this century.

At different times he wrote up portions of his variegated sea life in manuscript form and these are being put in sequence for publication as an eventual book by the National Maritime Museum staff -- some have appeared as articles in Sea History magazine, Sail magazine, Skipper magazine, and the Australian annual Dog Watch, where he was first published. The Deutsches Schiffahrts-Museum, the national maritime museum of Germany, printed Captain Klebingat's recollections of a North Atlantic convoy in World War II in its 1985 annual.

Captain Klebingat was a boy of fifteen when he rounded Cape Horn the first time in the year 1905. Acute observation and a memory that has been the wonder of maritime scholars around the world preserved every detail of seamanship and every quirk of his shipmates on that voyage -- and every subsequent voyage he ever made. It can be said that he looked at the seafaring life as it unrolled before him with the eye (and heard it with the ear) of a novelist . . . but never, until late life, with the idea of writing. He kept no journal or notes.

In recent years he maintained a correspondence with England, Australia, Germany, Denmark, France and other countries, being consulted by compilers of nautical dictionaries and similar experts and generously giving of his time to answer their questions.

Captain Klebingat was born near Kiel, Germany, in 1889. When he expressed determination to go to sea, over parental objections, his father finally relented and got him a berth in the Bremen full-rigged ship D. H. WATJEN. He rounded Cape Horn in the dread winter of 1905 when sub-Arctic gales were unusually severe and scores of similar ships were smashed up and several foundered. The well-handled WATJEN fared better than other vessels; the saga of the BRITISH ISLES that year, with men injured, washed overboard, and losing limbs, was set forth by Captain H. S. Jones in the memorable book, "The Cape Horn Breed." Fred Klebingat was in Pisagua, Chile when the BRITISH ISLES limped in.

A conversation with Captain Klebingat:

Don't forget, I was there. When she came in. And the word travelled -- maybe thirty ships in the harbor, no newspapers, no radio. Nothing else to talk about. How did we hear? Well, maybe somebody goes to the hospital . .

"Captain, the coal dust has got my eyes. (From discharging our cargo of briquets -- compressed coal dust -- by hand.) They're all puffed up; I can't see."

"All right, go to the hospital."

And in the hospital are these poor guys from the BRITISH ISLES. Legs frozen, arms frozen . . dying. If that had been a German ship, Capt. Barker would have done time.

And making the apprentices wait half the night without supper, after a day's work, while he goes ship visiting. Hanging around hungry in the boat. Nothing like that on the D. H. WATJEN . There was a law; eight hours work in the tropics. At least as far as the deck boys were concerned. Do you think that after I'd worked discharging briquets all day, there would be boat work at night? Not a chance of it.

From letters, same subject:

The skipper of the WATJEN was always ready with a drink when a hard job was to be done. There was no measuring anything out in a glass. It was too dark for that. So he passed the bottle and we boys also had a snifter. I can't imagine Barker wasting good rum on common sailors, much less deckboys.

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Capt. Piening (master of the four-mast bark PEKING preserved at South Street Seaport in New York, and later marine superintendent for the Flying P Line) was ordinary seaman on the SUSANNA that year.

Klebingat:

We saw the SUSANNA leaving Port Talbot, towing past, bound for sea. We weren't even half loaded; we said, "She'll be home for Christmas . . . You always belittle your own ship -- talk up the other fellow; you are always praising "the last ship I was in."

It is "my last ship this" or "my last ship that." (She may be hungry as hell, if truth be told.)

But the SUSANNA was smart looking, port painted, one of Siemer's. Our ship, the D. H., WATJEN, could make at maximum twelve if everything was cracking and the sea was smooth.

"She'll be home for Christmas," we said. Then, "Three cheers for the SUSANNA!"

"Three cheers for the D. H. WATJEN," came floating back over the water.

We left long after she did and we saw her arrive at Caleta Buena a long, long time after we arrived.

On the SUSANNA, there was only one casualty. The second mate suffered a broken nose and it was not set properly; it was at right angles to his face. (The reason for her inordinate length of time on the voyage is a different story.*)

Captain Piening and I both agree that somewhere in the BRITISH ISLES there should have been a dry place for the crew. I attribute a lot of the trouble to insufficient food and consequently very poor resistance. With me I have "The Life of Vice Admiral William Bligh" and he gave his men hot breakfast and even let them sleep in his quarters if there was no other dry place in the ship. I will try to get in touch with Capt. Jones and exchange notes with him on that winter of 1905. We were down to 63 south.

* The SUSANNA had one of the most spectacularly long voyages from 50 degrees south to 50 degrees south on record -- 94 days -- because her chronometer was faulty. She

It was out of all reason to expect the men to work the ship on scanty food (if you can call it even that), prepared by someone who happened to call himself a cook. Just imagine men surviving four hours and sometimes eight or more hours on flooded decks, wet to the skin, then retreating into a cave -- the fo'c's'le -- cold and clammy, water sloshing around, condensed perspiration dripping off the cold steel walls! The cook has not been able to serve them so much as a warm cup of tea. The bunks are damp and sodden. There is no place to dry your clothes or your oil skins. It is a wonder they survived. It angers me still that ship owners and shipmasters were that callous that they housed men that way. A sailing ship owner wouldn't stable his cattle in such a place.

Thus the BRITISH ISLES. But none of this happened in the D. H. WATJEN, a well-run ship, well-handled, although in a severe winter like 1905 we could not expect to escape hardship. We had an excellent cook, as cooks go in German vessels. I have seen the galley flooded many a time. When he felt it was safe to do so, the cook would open the upper part of the lee door to get some air into the place. But now and then a larger sea than usual boarded the ship from alee, poured in the open door and drowned the galley fire.. Quite a few times I saw the galley fill up to nearly the top of the range.

The cook got busy and bailed the place out. Then somewhere up under the deckhead he had some kindling in a dry place -- a shot of coal oil, and up blazed the fire. Our remarkable cook never failed to produce a hot meal in all those five weeks we were off Cape Horn. Many a cook would have given in, but not this man. He came from Bremerhaven.

What's more, the skipper, Capt. Gerdes, was concerned about the welfare of his men and so one of the deckboys was detailed to keep the galley fire going at night so the men could dry their clothing.

(footnote cont.)

sailed endlessly to the west to clear the dangerous southern coast of Chile before turning north. See Alan Villier's "The War with Cape Horn" (Scribners, 1971) for an interview with Capt. Piening about this rounding as well as a fine nine page description of a Cape Horn voyage in command of PEKING.

The boy Klebingat, obliged to wash the sailor's mugs, watched for an opportunity to step out on deck. The upper half of the two section fo'c's'le door was open and he saw a couple of feet of water momentarily collected in the scuppers under the ship's rail. He dashed out with a wooden bucket, closing the lower part of the door behind him. But at the same moment the WATJEN took a sickening lunge to leeward; her cargo was shifting a bit at this point in the voyage and it increased the ship's angle of heel. The boy looked up and saw a ten foot wall of water suspended over him. Meanwhile inside the fo'c's'le the watch below, feeling the ship sag and knowing what was coming, slammed the upper part of the steel door to keep Drake's Strait from invading their quarters. Young Klebingat was locked out in his moment of peril. He seized the fore braces which had an emergency lead to this part of the ship and hung on for dear life.

I was under water for ever. I was going to drown right on the fore deck. I hung onto the braces like grim death, and the icy Cape Horn salt water whirled me around, whirled me around. It took quite a long time for the ship to free herself of that tremendous load of water. Meanwhile the sailors could not get near me.

They finally reached me, gagging on salt water I'd swallowed, chilled, frightened. That was my souvenir of the famous Cape Horn and I've never forgotten it.

Some sixty odd years later Capt. Klebingat, in an exchange of correspondence with Capt. Piening compared notes on their experiences as lads off Cape Stiff in the year 1905:

My dear Fred,

Looking at the drawing of a windjammer in rough weather by your friend and co-worker Charles Rosner:* "Crew's mess kid forward . . ."

Exactly the way he depicts it here it happened to me in the

* Rosner, a well-known American illustrator, had started his sea life in the German four-masted bark HERBERT.

SUSANNA but -- the sea got me, the mess kid went overboard, and I was washed under the spare top-mast yard with both legs. (The spar had momentarily floated.) Luckily both watches were on deck -- ready to wear the ship round. They got busy with a dozen capstan bars -- but could, of course, lift very little but pulled me out of my heavy leather sea-boots (at that time rubbers were unknown in German ships). When I came around again I was washing to and fro on the floor of the fo'c's'le, also the boots, the thick woolden stockings were half off, and on deck they were still hollering.

With all good wishes,

Herman N. Piening
von Huttenstrasse 12
2 Hamburg 50
W. Germany

Captain Klebingat wrote in later years:

I realized at an early age that there must be some seafaring going on where one did not have to round Cape Horn in the middle of the Southern winter.

I was very lucky that I had a chance to break away from the Cape Horn nitrate trade at such an early time. But to my dying day I will carry those scars on my fingers to remind me of the misery -- always wet and cold -- called out at any time to handle sails and every minute on deck in constant danger of being washed overboard. A lack of fresh water . . I mean to keep yourself clean, so that your hands started to fester. On the decks a green slime begins to form. And after all this going on for weeks, you come to a so-called port where not a blade of grass was growing . . to a shanty town of sin, sweat, stink, fleas and venereal disease.

Fred Klebingat was destined to find his ideal seafaring in the wooden schooners and barkentines built on the West Coast of the United States and engaged in the lumber and South Sea trade, but that did not happen immediately. He joined another big German square-rigger, the four-mast bark ANNA, and the ship was sorely tried in the North Atlantic by a West Indian hurricane. She loaded at New York and went on to make what the Captain called "themoost beautiful voyage I ever made," threading through the fragrant islands of the East Indies, past Java and Bali, and finally to Yokohama with case oil (five gallon cans of kerosene, two to a wooden box) Captain Klebingat's description of how case oil was stowed aboard a sailing ship and discharged in the Orient has just been incorporated into a book by the German maritime

historian Heinz Burmester describing the career of the case oil-carrying full-rigged ship RICKMER RICKMERS, now being restored at Hamburg.

In Newcastle, New South Wales, where the ANNA went next, a large American schooner tied up alongside. It gave young Fred a chance to look over the way things were done in vessels flying the stars and stripes. Although the German captains were fair men, he was getting tired of the "caste" system in the fo'c's'les of German ships where the able seamen lorded it over the junior members of the crew. This was in 1908. He joined the vessel alongside the ANNA; she was the CRESCENT, the largest schooner that had been built on the Pacific Coast up to that time and practically brand new. The captain was Theodore "One-eyed" Olsen. Young Klebingat found that he had shipped with a harsh but able shipmaster.

Klebingat:

I will tell you how I came to join the CRESCENT.

The D.H. Watjen & Co. firm had a rule that boys who were born on the waterfront did not have to pay anything to ship and the wages were ten marks a month. Boys who were born inland and wanted to go to sea had to pay the firm 350 marks and the wages were only five marks a month. (This was somewhat similar arrangement to the British apprentice system where a premium was paid). The idea was that the sea heritage was being strengthened -- the boy on the waterfront was considered born for it.

The boys got very hard treatment in the German ships, particularly in the Hamburg vessels. Less so in the ships from Bremen. The lowest category was deckboy, or "junge". Then there was "leitmatrose", or ordinary seaman. As far as the able seamen went, both of these categories were beyond the pale until you became one of the big shots -- the able seamen were the big shots. They went around referring contemptuously to the "junges" and sometimes included the ordinary seamen when they said it. Although they might just be courteous enough to not call an ordinary "boy" to his face.

In the German ships deck boys were slaves -- they were the sailors' slaves. That was not the case in the fo'c's'le of British ships, where everyone took turn-about as "peggy", one week at a time. But here -- wash the dishes! scrub the floor (they expected you to keep that deck white!), fetch the grub! While Mr. Sailor was in his bunk smoking his pipe. And you did it in your own time -- you had to get the dishes washed after a meal and before eight bells turn-to time. And you were lucky to get even hot water from the cook. Salt water at that.

They kept you down. It was all class system in those German ships, and it galls me to this day when I think about it. To be ordered around by some ignorant A.B.! It was not that I had any trouble as far as ships' work went. I worked hard; the officers liked me. The trouble was up forward.

By law a boy was well protected. The regulations were all posted on a fo'c's'le card. No more than ten hours of work in the temperate zones, eight hours in the tropics without overtime being paid. Germany was in advance of other nations on matters like this. The overtime rate was 40 phennig (or 10 cents, American) for boys. My pay as a deck boy was ten marks (1000 phennig) a month, equivalent of \$2.50 American or 8.15 cents a day.

In the D. H. WATJEN, my first ship, we were apart from the sailors; the boys were in a separate house and we weren't servants for those herrenvolk. I got fed up with it on the ANNA, my second, and it was one of the reasons that I decided on a change.

I looked at the grub they were getting on American vessels in Antofagasta. And I looked at the treatment they were getting. (The ANNA had delivered a cargo of coal to Antofagasta from Newcastle, Australia and we were now back in Newcastle for another load). I had in mind that it was to be either an Australian ship or an American. I decided to pay off. The requirement on the German ships was that you could ask for your discharge after 18 months on board. I had been there 22 months. My intention was to look for a South Sea island trader, but a longshore strike headed me off -- the seamen were on strike, too. A picket line. I saw several of the Craig barks from Auckland in Newcastle at that time. I admired those vessels; they were so small and beautifully kept that it seemed a shame to load them with a filthy cargo like coal. But then the Craig firm in Auckland were coal merchants. I tried to ship in one of them, but there never was an opening.

The CRESCENT was lying alongside the ANNA in Newcastle. I looked the big schooner over (they said in Newcastle that she was a hungry scow) but I saw what they were eating, and I looked down and saw a man working on the sailmaker's bench and smoking and the sailors going around with pipes in their mouths . . . nothing like that allowed on the German ship. You don't smoke when you work.

It's an American ship for me, I thought. I walked along the Dike to see what was offering. I went aboard the REUCE* and I saw a big guy about 6'2" come shuffling along the deck. I surmised he was the second mate. One look at that big bruiser was enough; I made a hundred and eighty degree turn.

* Speaking of the REUCE, I have to remark that those wooden Cape Horn ships must have been wonderful sea boats . . . or otherwise those gingerbread cabin overhangs wouldn't last five minutes. The way that poop overhangs with carved knees (looking at a picture of the bark PACTOLUS) -- and these panelled cabin doors made out of wood underneath . . . The ANNA, built of steel at Glasgow, was a different story. There were two square ports about 3' feet square in the iron poop bulkhead and about 3' off the deck. There was a handle -- a horizontal bar -- over each of these holes so that you could grab it and swing yourself in.

If any ladies came on board, they had to enter the cabin aft by the captain's stairs.

The PACTOLUS was a beautiful vessel in her proportions. She was in Newcastle in 1908 that time, and so were the ST. FRANCES and BIG BONANZA. Of course, none of them was still in the Cape Horn trade.

The way the wheel house of these down-Easters was designed also proves their buoyancy -- on any steel ship that style of construction -- square across the back -- wouldn't survive.

On the STAR OF POLAND it was built of steel and round in back; no force on earth could uproot it.

And if you go further and pause to admire
A ship that's as neat as your heart could desire,
As smart as a frigate aloft and alow
Her brasswork like gold and her planking like snow
Look round for a mate by whose twang it is plain
That his home port is somewhere 'round Boston or Maine.

(C. FOX-SMITH.)

I had seen all I wanted to see aboard the REUCE. My education was too far advanced -- I was too good a listener to sailor talk -- to get trapped on a ship with an animal like that.

The HOMEWARD BOUND was lying in what they called the Basin -- she was a handsome ship. The white hull didn't show any dirt, the poop was covered with an awning and side curtains to keep out the coal dust, and what brass I could see was brightly polished. She's a looker, too, I said to myself -- too much going on there. I suspected a bucko mate or a bluenose second mate. I had learned about this class of officer in the fo'c's'le -- it might be that one of the sailors would point out a Nova Scotiaman in port and tell a story about hard treatment aboard. Maybe he's been in her.

But the name fascinated me -- HOMEWARD BOUND -- she was later the STAR OF HOLLAND. There were only two yards on her spanker mast, one on the spider band and another above fastened to the cap band. An unusual rig. Somebody called it a "jackass bark."

A pretty ship, a pretty ship . . but that's one thing I already knew; a pretty ship takes labor to make it pretty. I would be doing the scraping and scratching that kept her that way if I joined the HOMEWARD BOUND.*

* Another vessel in port that time was the JEANNETTE FRANCOISE, a Dutchman, and one of the most beautiful four-masted barks I have ever seen. I sold my sea boots to one of the fellows in her. Those heavy cowhide boots were too hard on my feet, not flexible enough. (Years later I bought rubber boots to go in the MELROSE.)

Mostly in the tropics I worked barefooted all the time. When you're up aloft barefooted, you are far more sure of yourself than in any kind of shoes or boots -- you can climb where nobody else can climb.

The skipper of the FRANCOISE carried his daughter along, a young lady in her teens. The daughter was pretty and so was the little ship. The second mate was courting her -- I admired her from a distance. She wouldn't have anything to do with an ordinary seaman like me.

I used to roam around the harbor. I went on board different ships. On the FRANCOISE they showed me the cabin. Ships' crews come aboard our ship too and talk.

I decided that the CRESCENT was flash enough for me, I went aboard. Captain "Hungry " Olsen was, I believe, the only captain she ever had, and it was he that I approached.

"Do you need a sailor, captain?"

He looked me over. I think what he really was looking for was a coal shoveler; he had to dig all that Newcastle coal out in the next port and I was young and strong.

Capt. Olsen was a Norwegian, but he looked just like a down-Easter, dried up, skinny as a rail, about six feet tall. He had acquired the nasal twang of a true Yankee. Somebody said that he was a good square-rigger man. I took it from that that he had been in the American Cape Horn ships, the tough class of vessel that they built in Bath and Thomaston. That probably accounted for the loss of one eye, too. He may have lost it in a scuffle with a fo'c's'le jack who made the mistake of being somewhat slow to obey an order. But that is merely surmise on my part.

Capt. P. A. McDonald claims that he never heard him called "Hungry Olsen", that his more familiar sobriquet of "One-Eyed" Olsen was the only nickname he ever had. That is not the case, as I knew him before McDonald ever went mate with him in the CRESCENT. I'll say that Olsen was a seaman through and through. I think that he owned shares in the ship.

"Yes, I do need a sailor," he finally said. "Go up to my boarding master on Monday. He'll sign you on."

This was on Saturday afternoon. So I went up to the Black Diamond boarding house on Monday and joined my first American ship, May 5, 1908.

"You're quitting, 'Lange'? asked the mate of the ANNA when he heard about it. (That's what they called me because I was tall.)

"Sure. Work on deck twelve hours a day and then go in the fo'c's'le and wash the dishes for those guys. Be servant for a bunch of lazy bums . . for nothing. I'm going where I don't have to wash dishes."

Karl Schroeder was top dog in the port fo'c's'le in the ANNA. He had an interesting experience that had a bearing on these matters. Karl was in his fifties and had sailed for years in the petroleum Klippers, the ships that carried barrel oil from Bayonne or Point Breeze to Europe. It was noticed that Schroeder didn't order the junges around.

"Why don't you go after the boys, Karl?" one of the first-trip A. B.s asked him.

Karl, lying back in his bunk, lit his pipe and said:

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"I'll tell you why. It was on a voyage to New York and back (I forget the name of the ship Schroeder mentioned.) I used to give the boys hell. 'Shine my shoes!' 'This plate is not clean -- wash it again!' 'Scrub that damn deck . . .!' 'Fill my pipe!' And so on.

"All went well; the boys did what they were told. But I had not reckoned on one that was smarter than the rest. At the end of the voyage, paying off before der Wasserschout (shipping commissioner -- there is a book in German by a retired seafaring man, Von Schiffjunge zu Wasserschout) this ordinary protested at the amount paid him. He said that he had overtime due.

"Overtime!" exclaimed the captain, "I didn't authorize any overtime."

The ordinary produced a list. Lighting pipe -- so much time. Polishing shoes -- so much time. Wait on table . . .

"You told this boy to do these things, captain?"

The captain didn't know a thing about it.

"Who gave you the orders?"

"Karl Schroeder."

Well that was me. I came along a little while later for my pay; I wasn't in the room when the above took place. I heard about it afterward.

"Here is a little matter, Herr Schroeder, said the Wasserschout to me when I came up to the counter. "You owe (he gave the boy's name) for four hundred and twenty hours overtime at thirty phennig an hour."

"I should say not," I said. I was insulted. "That was the boy's duty."

"Oh, no," said the Wasserschout. Under German law, you are nobody's boss. All members of the crew are schiffsman except the officers and the captain. You should have studied the Seemann's Ordnung that is hanging in the fo'c's'le . . . I order you to pay it."

"And pay it I had to."

Schroeder's experience did not put any ideas into my head. I wasn't expecting any overtime aboard the ANNA. I cleaned out the fo'c's'le, but I didn't shine any shoes. I drew the line. "If you don't like it, come out on deck!" I stuck up for my own -- some of those younger A. B.s who might get into the habit of

bossing you around were not so popular with the old timers. I played on that.

I told the mate that I could sign on the CRESCENT at the going rate for an A. B. in Australian ports, four pounds ten a month, which was \$21.72.

"I'll go to the Old Man and promote you A. B." he said. (In two months more they would have had to make me Able Seaman, in any case). As A. B. I would get 40 marks instead of 10 marks, but that was still just \$10.00 a month.

"No, I've made up my mind, Steuermann." ("Steurmann".-- that was the way we addressed the mate. They didn't use that term in Hamburg ships -- it would be "Herr" so-and-so, or "Herr" so-and-so. Whichever it happened to be. On the average, Bremen had more easy going ways.) The mate said in parting, "Don't stay in those schooners too long -- you won't learn anything."

But he was wrong. The thing was that they didn't have some old sailor to pick out for the special jobs. With only six men you had to do everything -- sewing sails or splicing wire or rope. You were expected to go ahead and do it -- you're an A. B. No favorites played.

So I took my clothes bag on my shoulder, took the boat, and went aboard the CRESCENT. (She had shifted and was no longer alongside the ANNA). I left my sea chest behind. When a man comes to the Pacific Coast he has to be more mobile; you needed help to carry a sea chest. I suspected I was entering a more practical way of doing things than the old European way. A fellow from the CRESCENT took my chest; he shipped in the ANNA. He wanted to see Europe.

Capt. Olsen was a slave driver. But I'll say this for the man; he was one of the best seamen I ever met. And the CRESCENT was a masterpiece of the wood shipbuilding art.

To one who never had served in a Pacific Coast lumber schooner, the size of timber in these vessels seemed unbelievable. This was the first time I saw it. The CRESCENT had a keelson that consisted of three timbers side by side. On top of these were two timbers of the same size, one on top of the other. Then there was the salt box* on top of that, which also held the heavy

* All Pacific Coast wooden vessels were salted. The space between each rib above the turn of

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wooden stanchions in place. The whole mass of timbers was bolted through and through; they were of exceptional lengths.

For fore and aft strength these big schooners and barkentines depended on the ceiling. People unacquainted with the construction of wooden ships do not realize that there is planking on the inside of the ribs as well as outside, and that this inner planking was the heavier of the two. On the CRESCENT this ceiling, as it was called, must have been 14" thick. The shipwrights used select material without knots. The ceiling was thickest on the sides of the vessel and somewhat thinner where it formed the bottom of the hold.

Olsen talked through his nose; his whole mannerism was down-East, although he came from a place called Kragero in Norway. He was a mean individual; he could be mean anytime. To this day I do not know with which eye he looked -- or rather stared -- at me if he thought that I didn't move a paintbrush fast enough. It may have been his glass eye.

He was the only skipper I was with who carried his wife with him at all times. Mrs. Olsen was mean, too. She was an Australian woman and about half Theodore Olsen's age. She probably came from the gutter; it was whispered, of course, that she had been a prostitute. Sometimes they invested in a Yankee schooner and married the captain. She was a fine looking woman, smartly turned out. Both the Old Man and Mrs. Olsen wore the best of everything. She was the buxom type, but that was the fashion then.

How that man could carry sail! It scared his wife. Running heavy all night she would sit at the head of the companionway, inside. He was on deck, not sleeping any. She would open the door: "Theo, Theo . . ."

"Hmpph, hmpph . . ."

(footnote cont.)

the bilge was filled with rock salt. Due to leaks in the planking and waterways this salt dissolved over the years, and in the process lightened the vessel above water. It was hard to restore this salt between the inner and outer "skin" of the vessel. But in the hold, whenever possible -- on top of the keelson, in the wake of the hatches, and in the pointers at bow and stern -- I always renewed or replenished the salt that had been dissolved when I became a shipmaster.

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We were running the easting down. If it blew up too hard, there were times when Olsen would leave the mains'l hoisted and take everything else in. It was a hell of a strain on that one mast, though . . on the shrouds and backstays and running gear. The CRESCENT had some fine day's runs to the longitude of Tahiti, where Olsen turned north. We sighted Moorea in the Society Group.

Very seldom did the CRESCENT take any water on board. It was her first coal cargo. There must have been 3000 tons in her. (I'm the boy who shoveled out 1/8 of that 3000 tons!) They had no Plimsoll marks, those ships. To keep our feet dry, all we had to do was put the sheet planks (which were long) from hatch to hatch to walk on. It was very seldom that the water came over the hatches. It wouldn't be that way in an iron ship.

Of course, in bygone days they carried coal on deck, too, but the fellows who had the boilers -- the consignees -- put a stop to that. Salt water in the coal. The insurance companies could have had something to do with it, too.

* * * *

We had a couple of dozen hens aboard that furnished eggs for the captain's table. The chicken coop was built of tongue and groove fir, about 8 feet long by 4 wide and 4 high. It had two drawers underneath to catch the droppings. One morning while cleaning this gadget, a strong puff of wind came and yanked a drawer out of my hands and overboard it went. The skipper gave me a dirty look -- very likely he assumed that I had done it on purpose. And it looks could have killed, this was it. But he did not say anything and the carpenter made a new one by night.

It was the same food forward and aft in the West Coast schooners, but the presence of the captain's wife sometimes made a difference. It did in the CRESCENT. The crew were all on "whack", while the eggs produced by the chickens, and sometimes a chicken itself, were just for Captain Olsen and his wife. The Mrs. and the skipper gathered the eggs.

Mrs. Olsen used to cook the eggs on a primus stove in the captain's bathroom. She did not use the pantry, a kind of public area, because somebody might steal them there. Also the eggs were more or less supposed to be a secret. These people had a little bit of respect for themselves; the captain and his wife didn't want to sit there at the table and eat eggs and the mates eating none. Also if she used the pantry there might be trouble with the cook -- "What is this stuff, etc.?" In the bathroom, where there was plenty of room incidentally, she could keep control of her cooking gear.

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The CRESCENT was an extreme case, although it was quite common for skippers' wives to make something for themselves. More or less secret -- but your nose tells you. I remember standing at the wheel of the CRESCENT and smelling those eggs frying.

In the S. N. CASTLE it was all different -- if one had chicken, all had chicken. But then down in the Islands you could get a dozen chickens for an empty meat barrel and in the Marquesas pigs for a dollar each. And it should be remembered that it was different style on a deepwater voyage with a schooner, which this was, than on the coastal schooners. The S. N. CASTLE, of course, was a special case and different again.

In the CRESCENT, Mrs. Olsen had the keys to the storeroom -- only the salt meat and the potatoes were kept forward. She looked out that we didn't eat too much.

Once we went aft in a body and complained about the food. By American standards the CRESCENT was a "hungry" ship; by European standards it was hotel fare.

We made our complaint to Captain Olsen, but the Mrs. was there, too.

"I give them their whack . ." she said. "Whack" was the British usage.

Our spokesman said, "We're not talking to you, Mrs. Olsen; we were speaking to the captain."

The Old Man nudged her out of the foreground -- he knew it wasn't ship's etiquette for her to be speaking up. Those that signed on for the voyage at Eureka, California did not trust "Hungry Olsen" further than they could see him and so everything was in the articles in black and white. This, of course, was copied on the Forecastle Card. It read: "Working time in port shall be nine hours from 7 A.M. until Noon and from 1 P.M. until 5 P.M. Coffee shall be served at Nine A.M. and ten minutes given for this."

We started to discharge coal into whaleboats the day after we arrived at Makaweli; the work began at 7 A.M. ship's time. At noon, when we came up for dinner, the mate (a Russian by the name of Engelmann) came along:

"Say, boys, set your clocks back twenty minutes. The captain has just come back aboard and he found out ashore that our time is twenty minutes early."

"Say now! Hold on . . do you think we're green? Our working time is nine hours and when the nine hours have been worked we will stop. You can tell the captain that."

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So we took our clock down in the hold and when nine hours were up we came out of the hold and went aft to see the captain.

"We have worked nine hours according to the articles," our spokesman said. "Are you willing to pay overtime?"

"No, you damn lazy buggers . . ."

"You know damn well that we are not lazy. And if there are any buggers on this ship they must be aft."

"That will do, now," said Olsen and with that we left for forward to clean up.

It was hard work shoveling coal in the month of August. We were eight men in the hold -- four of us sailors on one side and four Hawaiians that the captain hired on the other. We shoveled the coal into big rattan baskets which were then hoisted out and landed on a kind of catamaran made of two whaleboats surmounted by a big wooden box or corral. The catamaran was rowed by Hawaiians back and forth, to shore with the coal and returning with the empties.

"Take your pipes with you," said the mate when we went down below. He didn't want any waste motion -- somebody climbing out to get his pipe or his tobacco from the fo'c's'le. You could shovel a couple of tons of coal in the time that you were sneaking off for a smoke or to go to the head.

The CRESCENT had no t'ween decks, but she had t'ween deck beams. So we dug into each hatch and skimmed her off down to the height of the beams. The hatches were worked all more or less at the same rate so as not to strain her. Then we dug down into each hatch again and took the trunk out, and in so doing uncovered her spine, the keelson.

I couldn't see over it. That tremendous mass of timber acts as ballast, too.

Finally we discharged what was left in the wings.

On Sundays we visited our coal-shoveling Hawaiian friends at their homes in Waimea canyon where they owned small taro patches. We sampled poi and were entertained with an illicit Hawaiian brew called "swipes". The captain let half the crew go ashore at a time, and one of the men on board rowed us ashore in the dinghy. Captain Olsen was insistent that the boat be hoisted in the davits as soon as the man got back.

There was still some coal in the CRESCENT when we finished discharging, although the cargo was supposed to be all out. It

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was piled thick on the pointers and in different corners. Capt. Olsen went down with the young customs man who was supposed to certify that the cargo had all been discharged.

"Oh, that's just a little carelessness. They should have cleaned better. Just dust . . ."

The customs man didn't know any better.

Later when we got to the Columbia River the crew spent a whole morning digging out these pockets of coal and getting it up on deck. There must have been twenty tons. Captain Olsen no doubt sold it.

Olsen was too mean to pay the charge for mooring at the buoy at Makaweli so we anchored. But one morning she began to drift. At noon time we ran a manila line to the mooring buoy; Olsen did that during the dinner hour so that it was on our time -- "necessity". Then we were sent back down to shovel coal. At five o'clock, after we'd had our supper, we were turned to mooring the CRESCENT to the buoy with the anchor cable as we should have done in the first place. He had let it go all day so that it would have to be done during the crew's time after our regular day's work was over. It had to do with the vessel's safety so by law no overtime was paid. The way Olsen figured things, five minutes more work out of a man would make him so much. He even endangered the ship, he was that greedy.

But the result of the delay was that a sea had gotten up. The French sailor and Captain Olsen were out in the dinghy, making the cable fast. Olsen wouldn't trust anybody, and he was out there on that buoy himself, riding it, plunging up and down in the sea that was running. He had the anchor shackle over one arm; he was afraid anyone else would lose his anchor shackle.

I saw him go under a couple of times. I said to myself, "That's a good place for you, you son-of-a-bitch. ."

Mrs. Hersey, whose husband had the W. H. MARSTON and later spent years in the movie ships (she was caretaker of the BOUNTY and PANDORA after he died), always claimed that the burning of the CRESCENT six years later and the circumstances of the boat voyage that followed affected Mrs. Olsen's sanity a little. That was in 1914; the CRESCENT burned at sea and they had to make a 1400 mile voyage, all in the same boat, Olsen, Mrs. Olsen and the crew.

That trip in the boat was hell on her; a friend of mine was there and he told me about it. When Mrs. Olsen had to obey the call of nature, a man had to stand up and hold up a blanket to screen her from the men forward. She and a bucket and the Old Man were on the other side of it. How she must have hated that ceremony -- she always had only contempt for the men before the mast. And this went on for 1400 miles. It must have got to her mind

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because when they finally got to San Francisco -- sailing in through the Golden Gate and nobody realizing they were survivors of a schooner burned at sea until they tied up at Meiggs wharf -- she went into a sanitarium. I believe she was in and out of sanitariums until the end of her days.

Young Klebingat paid off in the CRESCENT in Portland, Oregon and encountered a less preferable shipmaster, the only incompetent he ever encountered in command of an American ship. This was in the steel four-masted topsail schooner AMERICANA, laden with a cargo of big timbers for Osaka, Japan. The AMERICANA was built in Scotland for the Pacific trade; she was by this time rusty and run-down.

Now the captains in those days were always capable men. I always found it so. With one exception in my experience, and that was the man who had command of the AMERICANA, one Milton Lawson, who was really Larsen. (His father had anglicized the honest Norwegian name.) He was a young man, shiftless looking and he seemed to have difficulty in keeping himself clean. Between him and his mate, one Delahanty, an old stiff on the coast, the AMERICANA had no command. Lawson had the job because his father was port captain for Simpson Lumber Co. I looked it up one time and his father had a large share in a great many of their vessels.

Better a "One-eyed" Olsen with a Yankee twang.

Klebingat:

I shipped in the AMERICANA with Captain McVicar. He had been master of the brigantine GENEVA and at one point had a butcher shop in San Pedro. Capt. McVicar was stout and was only exceeded in this respect by his wife.

The steward told me that she used to eat six eggs as part of her breakfast, and he was obliged to serve it to her in her bunk. The captain had four eggs with his breakfast and sometimes she would prevail on him to give her these, too.

"Captain, that makes ten eggs for Mrs. McVicar . ." said the steward.

"Oh, that's all right. Let her have what she wants, steward."

But Capt. McVicar soon left the vessel: "Who wants to go to a heathen country like Japan? I am sorry to leave the ship, but Mrs. McVicar would not want to go to a place like that."

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There was a call from shore one afternoon shortly after McVicar left; we were taking aboard the last of the deckload. One of us jumps into the dinghy. He brings out a stranger, a man in his thirties, clean shaven, somewhat on the skinny side. His mouth bulges with a wad of tobacco.

He expectorates on the deckload and looks about.

"Anybody around here know a cure for crabs. I have a hell of a dose of crabs." (Scratching himself.)

At that moment the cook happened to step out of the galley door.

"That son-of-a-bitch is cook here? I'll fire the bastard. . he's full of prunes . . " (They had been shipmates before.)

Everybody stood around with their mouth open. That was the new captain?

The AMERICANA towed down the Columbia and got outside and into heavy weather and the deckload lashings started to part. There was moaning and vacillation and what to do? It was actually Olson, the donkeyman, who finally took charge. There was worry that one side of the deckload might go overboard and that the weight of the other side might capsize the vessel. I do not recall seeing either of the mates (the second mate was a man named Krantz) that stormy Sunday. The captain, a Colt in his hip pocket, appeared at times and ran around the deckload.

"Work, boys, work -- you are fighting for your lives!"

The pistol in his pocket, it came out later, was to blow his brains out if the schooner capsized.

The AMERICANA had no command. But she had a good bunch of sailors forward and we worked with seizing wire to fasten the faulty turnbuckles to the deck lashing chains. When the deck load was secure Capt. Lawson was determined to abandon the voyage. But he said he couldn't put back into the Columbia River because he owed too many unpaid bills in Portland; he couldn't put into Frisco because his Old Man was there and would raise hell with him. So it was make for Puget Sound. But outside Flattery the weather moderated and Lawson took it into his head to jettison one level of the square timbers that formed our deckload. So on a beautiful day the crew set to work; we got rid of one tier of lumber over the side and did a pretty fair job of straightening up and lashing the rest. The jettisoning of these square timbers was done to the hazard of other shipping, I might point out. Finally our captain decided to continue the voyage to Japan.

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On the passage home Lawson was in no hurry. If the wind blew from the south he went north, and if it blew from the north he went south, and if the wind was east we sailed west. He was short of money and it was more days, more dollars. He and Delahanty, the mate, who as I say, was not much either, squabbled. One day when I was at the wheel, I asked Lawson why he spat on the binnacle and against the white deckhouse.

"To spite the mate."

"Well, you don't spite the mate, you spite me -- the sailors have to clean it up."

Lawson was a great one on the spitting. He used to chew a quarter or a half of a plug of Star tobacco. His shirt usually was dirtied with spittle, and in the transport BUFORD later (where Lawson got a job as second mate -- he was fired from the AMERICANA) I am told he used to lift the canvas boat cover as he went by and spit in a boat. This saved him the trouble of walking to the ship's side.

So we came back to the United States in the first ship I'd joined in an American port. AMERICANA by name, but nothing American about her. We arrived in Port Townsend in about 45 days or so . . . Lawson couldn't help it, the wind was mostly west.

The AMERICANA was a misfit and the same could be said about her captain.

Presently Klebingat made a coastal voyage as donkeyman in the schooner ANNIE E. SMALE, arriving in San Francisco for the first time in late spring, 1909. Captain Klebingat's pungent way of talking is caught in the following episode, which I wrote down as he told it fifty years after the event. He is discussing the captain of the ANNIE E. SMALE on the voyage down the coast:

Captain Colstrup started as cook in firewood schooners. He was in the J. EPPINGER. Next he became captain in firewood schooners. Then I think he married a little money and they built the ANNIE E. SMALE for him. He later had the MARY WINKELMAN, then the four-mast schooner HARVESTER, the bark HARVARD, the THOMAS P. EMIGH, four-mast barkentine. He was a very small man, and some sheik.

He was known on the coast as "Four Foot Nothing."

Now let's take him in command of the ANNIE E. SMALE. The ship has two feet of water in her, she is sinking really. It is winter; we are many a mile offshore, and the pump has just failed.

We dismantle the pump on the sloppy, rolling deck and here the six critical bolts, equal spaced in a circle, that hold the

leather retaining ring in place are corroded away, rusted beyond redemption. There are loud sounds of disgust and anger from some ("Now we're f-----d, Cap. Your God damn pumps are haywire!") but not from Colstrup.

"Not so loud, boys; don't tell the wife we're sinking. She won't sleep all night. Now there's a piece of hardwood there, just on top of the deckhouse . . ."

The hardwood is found, a piece sawed off and split up. All this in haste.

"Now you take one, and you, and you. Whittle it down about the size of those bolts. Anybody need a knife? . . . now that's it . . ."

Everybody stands around whittling, glad to have something to do.

"Now we want the ends split. And whittle out some wedges. Here, give them to me . . ."

And so Four Foot Nothing replaces the iron bolts with whittled out dowels, wedges in the ends.

"All right, anybody got a hammer? Drive them in. Cut them off flush . . ."

Now we slip the pump back together. It works . . . and so back to pumping out the ANNIE E. SMALE, pumping all night . . .

I had to admire that man, no excitement, no hurry up.

Captain Klebingat's booklet on the San Francisco city front* describes what happened next:

The SMALE was far gone and needed new spars and numerous repairs. Swayne & Hoyt, the managing owners, apparently did not have money to spare, so we put her on the mud at high tide on Mission Flat.

Later she was refloated, repaired, and after a couple of trips to Australia, wrecked on Point Reyes. The crew went ashore on the jibboom . . .

* Memories of the Audiffred Building & the Old City Front, Mills Ryland Company, April 1983.

By this time I was staying with the Finn boarding house keeper Algren at his Pioneer Hotel on Steuart -- "Russian Finn Alley," as it was then known.

It was on the City Front that I finally was able to carry out a long standing dream -- to go to the South Seas.

I was sitting on the forehatch of the SMALE one evening with the nightwatchman, Captain Ahlin; I remarked on wanting to go to Tahiti and such places. He said that he had just delivered the schooner HINANO down there and had come back in the old MARIPOSA. The S. N. CASTLE was in port and she was about the only vessel regularly in the trade. He knew Capt. von Dahlern and would introduce me . . . and that is how I came to join the barkentine as donkeyman.

S. N. CASTLE was getting ready to depart for the Marquesas, Tahiti, and Samoa. As it turned out, I was associated (although not continuously) with this old argosy from 1909 when I joined her until 1915 when I left as chief mate. I came to be known along the City Front as "Fred of the S. N. CASTLE." The captain was a fat, capable, witty, and profane old German by the name of von Dahlern, known as "One Dollar" in Papeete. Whenever we arrived in San Francisco, the marine reporters came down from the newspapers to interview the captain. It was like a scene on television; they swarmed around him like flies. Capt. J. H. von Dahlern was good copy.

I'm not one of those fellows with one foot in Germany and one in this country (what we used to call "white-washed Yanks") and neither was Captain von Dahlern. He used to get off a fine imitation of an acquaintance of his of the Prussian persuasion, a member of the Kriegs Verein and similar organizations, who declared that his years in the German Army were the happiest in his life. Captain von Dahlern had nothing but contempt for the military mind.

"You love your ship, you love sailing (he would imitate) . . . but I love my rifle" (" . . . aber ich liebe mein Gewehr").

He was a good interview for the marine reporters from the newspapers when the S. N. CASTLE made port. He had comments on many things . . . not only the Kriegs Verein, but the German Sons, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and his nephews and nieces in the Sons and Daughters of the Golden West.

On the ANNIE E. SMALE the young sailor had put his foot on the first step of the ladder of upward mobility. He had become a donkeyman.

Now, the term "donkeyman"; here on this coast he was generally a trustworthy A. B. who knew how to handle a boiler, who was a little mechanically inclined, who could

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file in a bearing, or set the slide valves in the steam chest of the winch. And, of course, also a man who knew how to drive the winch.

I had my eye on that job from the first time that I landed on the Pacific coast. Why mule the lumber and pack it around, when I could do all that work by pressing down on the friction lever and pull the throttle? The donkeyman also took care of the side lights and the fo'c's'le and galley lamps. And, of course, you had to be sober, and ready to get up an hour earlier than anyone else. At any rate it was a step up. Most of the skippers and mates on the coast at that period worked themselves up from A. B. by driving winches on steam schooners. The same on sailing schooners, the donkeyman was making more money, and again he had to be steady and reliable. Or he would not last.

Early on in the S. N. CASTLE, Klebingat had a sight of the ship that he would join next. Here, in contrast to the spoken Klebingat, giving a verbal description of "One-Eyed" Olsen or "Four Foot Nothing" and the pump, is a sample of his writing style:

It must have been the third morning out of San Francisco, before dawn, with a strong northwest wind blowing out of a cloudless sky. The stars had faded, but in the east Venus, the Morning Star, glittered and sparkled. A moon past full still hung in the western sky. Deeply loaded, steering a southerly course, the old barkentine S. N. CASTLE was hurrying on, a high following sea boosting her speed on her road to the northeast trades and a destination in the Marquesas.

"As soon as you have drunk your coffee," the mate on watch said to me, "go aloft and loose the skysail. She can stand it . . ."

I climbed the hundred and thirty odd feet to the skysail yard, the highest sail in the ship. I cast off the gaskets and the sail billowed out in the strong wind. Down on deck my watchmate and the mate hoisted the yard to set the sail. I lingered for a moment.

It is always a great sight from up that high -- water rushing along the ship's side, a school of porpoises gamboling ahead of the frothy bow wave, and the wide white wake behind. A couple of gooneys, the brown albatross of the North Pacific, were sailplaning forth and back across our track.

Before descending to the deck, I cast my eyes around the vast horizon. The sea was empty. Or so I first thought. But there where the sun was going to rise, there against those pink clouds, a sail was visible. Rapidly this sail -- sails -- raised

themselves over the rim of the horizon until the whole ship stood revealed.

From the direction in which she was first seen, and the course she was steering, my shipmates knew her to be one of the Associated Oil Company's sailing tankers, either MARION CHILCOTT or FALLS OF CLYDE. The two of them regularly carried fuel oil in bulk from near Santa Barbara to Honolulu. As the minutes passed we could make out four masts instead of three and so knew this to be the FALLS OF CLYDE.

All sail was set; her cotton canvas gleamed white in the morning sun. We assembled aft, the captain and the mates, the watch on deck and the watch below, even the cook, just to admire her as she crossed our course astern. Her sleek brown hull was ornamented at the bow with a graceful figurehead, a lady in white, who with unseeing eyes gazed out over the path ahead.

The FALLS was on her best sailing point, making two knots to our one. She seemed to skim the tops off the whitecaps in that high northwest sea. Spindrift and spray rose over her weather rail to wet the lower sails and form miniature rainbows as it drifted off to lee. At times she rolled over toward us, showing her streaming decks and water cascading off her fo'c's'le head and rushing out of freeing ports and scuppers; she was deep laden and showing scant freeboard.

She dipped her flag thrice as a greeting and farewell, as was customary in ships of sail, and we hauled down our colors three times in reply. So the FALLS OF CLYDE passed on and was soon lost to sight. There was no time to be wasted in the age of wind-driven ships. Little did I know then, in 1909, a lad of nineteen, that in the years to come my life would be closely bound to this majestic beauty of the seas.

* * *

November 8, 1971 letter to Charles E. Mason

"It is blowing and raining and days like this I enjoy most. I do not have to breast a southeast gale with a high deckload of lumber nor do I have to try to get to sea with a breaking Coos Bay bar. I let others worry about that. I enjoy the rattle of the rain on the roof."

Seafaring Career of Captain Fred Klebingat

(some highlights*)

Capt. Fred Klebingat was born near Kiel, Germany in 1889. His father was from East Prussia, of Lithuanian and French Huguenot stock, his mother of North German parentage as found near the Danish border -- "her people were toilers of the soil and sea . . . in other words, farmers, fishermen, and seafarers." The father worked in the post office; he gave a good education to the four boys and two girls in the family.

Kiel was a growing city and in the harbor were Swedish cutters discharging cobble stones and Welsh topsail schooners from Portmadoc unloading slates for roofing. Occasionally a large sailing ship from Burma would bring teak to the shipyards. Young Fred roamed the wharves, stared at the figureheads, and decided on a seafaring career. **

His father got him a job in the Bremen full-rigged ship D. H. WATJEN. Fred Klebingat rounded Cape Horn in the dread winter of 1905 when Antarctic gales and ship losses were at their worst. The well-handled WATJEN fared better than other ships; the saga of the BRITISH ISLES

* Does not include four mast bark ANNA, five-masted schooner CRESCENT, four-masted schooners AMERICANA, ANNIE E. SMALE, VIRGINIA, barkentine S. N. CASTLE, (mate) -- mate on four-mast bark FALLS OF CLYDE, mate of four-masted bark STAR OF POLAND, master of down-easter SANTA CLARA as movie ship replica of Lord Nelson's VICTORY.

** See "The Harbor of My Boyhood", attached.

that year, with men injured, washed overboard, and losing limbs to frost-bite is set forth by Capt. H. S. Jones in the memorable The Cape Horn Breed. Young Klebingat was in Pisagua when the BRITISH ISLES limped in.

"I realized at an early date that there must be some seafaring going on where one did not have to round Cape Horn in the middle of the Southern winter . . ." wrote Capt. Klebingat in later years. He found it in the big, buoyant Pacific Coast lumber schooners and barkentines and rose to command, although his first trip as captain was in an exotic old Dutch bark, teak over iron ribs, Kobe to Manila with a cargo of empty gin bottles and carboys of acid on deck, "Reckless Ross" Millman, the first man to ride a motorcycle around the inside of a barrel traveling as passenger (his cycle and barrel were in the hold) -- he had to get to Manila by carnival time.

That was in 1918; in 1919 Capt. Klebingat took command of the four-masted schooner MELROSE and continued in her until the mid-twenties; the MELROSE was the last regular Southseaman out of San Francisco, carrying lumber to Fiji and Tonga and returning with copra from Rotuma, Tonga, Niuaafou (Tincan Island) and Niutabutabu. The captain subsequently had many years as master of large schooner yachts in South Sea voyaging, commanded liberty ships and tankers in World War II in both Atlantic and Pacific, and, in 1969, at the age of eighty was captain of the motorship COOS BAY in the coastwise lumber trade.

* * *

The Harbor of My Boyhood

Capt. Fred Klebingat,
1979

Kiel was a growing city and therefore a great importer of lumber, cobblestones, and slates for roofing. The inner harbor was just thick with timber droghuvers moored bow on to the wharf. Barks and barkentines and three-mast schooners. Swedes and Finns, most of them. (Raumo was one of the home ports you often saw lettered on the stern.)

Old, old ships. I don't know where they were built. Some undoubtedly were down-Easters, launched years before in New England. There were many rigs; I've seen brigs there. The wharves were built to receive the timber with, in places, a kind of notch with an incline where the bow ports would fit. All the lumber was pushed ashore over the fo'c's'le head or out through the bow ports. All by hand . . . pass a stick out through the bow ports, the fellows ashore get hold of it, carry it on their shoulders, and pile it up or land it on a horse-drawn dray.

Old worn out buckets that had seen better days, kept going with windmill pumps, and if that failed they could float on their cargoes! Many of these vessels were Swedish owned and hailed from Skilinge or Brantewik. They may have made two trips a year before it was necessary to lay up due to ice in the Gulf of Bothnia. They tried to reach their home port before winter set in, but some did not manage this and wintered over at Kiel.

Some of the vessels had chains outside to hold them together, but they did not go to the expense, as we did here, of putting rods with a turn-buckle through the hull just below the deck. Most West Coast schooners had that done when getting a little up in age. It did a great deal of good.

Kiel was booming and needed all sorts of building materials. The Welsh brought tiles for the roofs of the new residences; the Swedes brought cobblestones; the Germans brought brick themselves from nearby kilns. What we called "Swedish cutters" were actually old British sailing trawlers. "Icy" Helgason said they called them cutters, too, in Iceland, although the rig was actually ketch. The cutters from Sweden brought square cobblestones cut out of granite and curb stones of the same material for the gutters in the streets.

Topsail schooners came from Wales with cargoes of roofing slate. Most of them hailed from Port Madoc and a few had small figureheads. On some of these vessels there might be an effort to paint the figurehead in colors. There would be a ghostly white face with coal-black hair and eyebrows, together with blue pupils, a coal-black frock with chrome-yellow buttons, and of course, black shoes.

Then there was the Danish mail boat that had a fine stern ornament. The ship's name, FREYA, and her homeport "Kobenhavn" were framed by a rope carving that ended in a batten on either side. Here there was a carving of the Norse goddess of love, Freya, to starboard and port, both sitting and facing each other. All this was done in gold leaf.

There was a great number of galleases from Marstal always to be seen in Kiel. They carried grain or cargoes of that kind. Additionally, small craft -- some of them with leeboards -- were to be found in a corner of the harbor where they came loaded with potatoes, turnips, apples and beans to peddle on board by the pound. The Elbe river splits into five branches above Hamburg; it is called Vierland, or "four lands". It is a great farming country and these craft came from there through the Kiel canal. They were called "ewers", flat-bottomed craft for grounding when the tide went out in the North Sea. Of German and Dutch registry, some from East Friesland on the Dutch border, they were smaller sisters of the lee-boarders that had a cabin aft.

In my boyhood days I saw many of this type of Dutch vessel. We called them "tjalks". But in the early 1900s the Dutch were already building most of them out of steel. They were always well-kept and the whole family of the skipper resided on board in the after house which was sunk half into the deck. A trunk cabin and square windows, geraniums on the window sill, a little shutter that slides, a knob on it, curtains . . .

They looked stumpy with that single stout mast and that nearly square rounded bow and lee boards that were hoisted by winches. I have seen them at sea in the Baltic. Captain William Smith of the FALLS OF CLYDE spoke to me about their seaworthiness. He was in a small bark in the North Sea hove-to in a severe easterly gale. His ship was making heavy weather of it, taking seas over. But close to them was a Dutch tjalk under storm sail. She rode the seas like a duck and aft the skipper's wife was washing clothes, all unconcerned. Some of these vessels with more than one mast, and I believe called "cuffs", made the voyage to the River Plate.

One day I saw a different kind of vessel at the wharves, a full-rigged ship, port painted, with to me then tremendous steel masts and yards. I

lingered in front of her, admiring the female figurehead which seemed to look down on me from her perch at the extremity of the bow, sheltered from above by an enormous spike bowsprit. This was no worn-out Finn from the Gulf of Bothnia; wrapped around with chains and kept afloat with a windmill pump. The big ship came from Burma, so they told me, with a cargo of teak logs for the shipyards, which were scattered all around the banks of the bay.

Then there were the yachts. Next to Cowes, this was the yachting center of Europe. As a boy I had all kinds of chances to see great sailing yachts during the Kiel Week Regatta. There was the full-rigged ship VALHALLA -- she looked like an old Indiaman with her fancy figurehead and her stern carvings. There was Lord Brassey's famous barkentine SUNBEAM and the three masted schooner ATLANTIC, and the other three master, UTTOWANA owned by Allison V. Armour. And of course there was Kaiser Bill's METEOR, which was built in the United States.

There were sailing yachts of all nations and rigs to be seen at the Kiel Regatta. One that particularly impressed me was a Dutch tjalk, square in the bow, her planking varnished, the leeboard on either side covered with brass and polished bright. It must have been some job to shine these up every morning.

The harbor was covered with yachts at anchor, lying in tiers -- there were buoys laid out for them. In the place of honor, near Kiel Castle, was J. Pierpont Morgan's steam yacht CORSAIR, all black hull and shining. The anchored craft all had flags arrayed over the tops. A grand sight

How could a boy, growing up with the panorama that Kiel presented, possibly settle for a life on shore?

* * *

*Conversations with Captain Klebingat: 1967,
et. seq. (K.K.)*

*A discussion of French sailing ships, and
the food served in windjammers.*

I always loved the look of the French sailing ships, especially the nitrate vessels of A. D. Bordes. And talk about class! Those French skippers knew how to put on the dog. Four men in the boat and a coxswain, fancy brass fittings all over and ashine, and fancy cushions for the Old Man to rest on while going ashore.

I had ample opportunity to see those vessels at their best; I was paid off the D. H. WATJEN at Dunkerque in April of 1906 after a voyage to the West Coast and back, and in Dunkerque again, six weeks later, after a trip home to Kiel, I joined the German four-mast bark ANNA for a voyage to New York, Yokohama, Newcastle, N. S. W., Antofagasta, and back to Newcastle.

As the ANNA slowly towed through the basins of Dunkerque on our way to sea I saw them--the four-masted ship TARAPACA (which I considered to be the most beautiful of all), the four-masted barks ATLANTIQUE and LOIRE, the WULFRAN PUGET. The smaller barks of Bordes were handsome, too. I saw others on the West Coast, the TARAPACA again, the UNION, the VINCENT DE PAUL. From time to time there were some large French sailing ships at Tahiti; I went aboard one, the VERSAILLES. They brought briquettes for the navy, or cargoes for the phosphate company at Makatea.

We of the ANNA associated quite a bit with French crews when we tied up with them together side by side in the Basin at Newcastle, N. S. W.

And all this baloney about bounty ships! The thing was this: it was sour grapes. British and German shipowners complained bitterly about the subsidized French competition. But at the same time some of their own shipping companies were getting fat subsidies, particularly the ones that operated ocean liners to win the "Blue Riband" of the Atlantic.

I like those bounty ships. They gave the crew so much more room; the sailmaker could work indoors. With that long poop and the long fo'c's'lehead the French ship nearly had an extra deck. No heavy water could stay on board. You did not have to swim around on the main deck filled up to the rails with green seas. I found this same seaworthiness in the lumber ships of the Pacific Coast. Those high deckloads gave the ships so much more freeboard that the water that came over was mostly spray. One could dispense with oilskins on a schooner if it weren't for the rain that accompanies our southeast gales.

I have a correspondent in Germany, Captain Willie Neuhauss, who was put aboard the French four-masted barks ASNIERES and then CHAMPIGNY as cadet--or pilotin--by the German seamanship school at Waltershoff. He wrote me last Christmas: "I agree with you that French sailing ships were the most beautiful on earth; the crews were outstanding and expertly trained. Many of them served their early years in the Iceland fisheries. Those two French sailing ships I sailed on were the best teachers that one could have. And they were good shipmates, fair weather or foul; I learned to speak French fluently which served me greatly later on. Off and on I meet with French Cap Horniers and of course our conversation is always about those ships we sailed in and the voyages that we made."

There was another account recently in Der Albatros of a German skipper who had served as pilotin on the CHAMPIGNY and VERSAILLES. He later made a voyage as A.B. on the German ship POSEN of the "Flying P" line on the voyage where she burned up. Although he had his troubles with the skipper because he did not know the German names for all the gear, still they could not get back at him because he had such a thorough education in seamanship. Like Neuhauss, he speaks of the treatment and education aboard French ships with the highest respect.

French ships were in San Francisco and the Columbia River and Puget Sound in large numbers up to and through the first World War. They came, of course, to load grain. The sailors of other ships cleared out here, but not these people. In all my years on this coast, I have been shipmates with only two Frenchmen.

Both of these men were good seamen. I noticed their thriftiness; they patch their overalls patch on patch. The reason that French seamen did not run away from their ships was that they had even then a pension. Other nations just discard their sailors--throw them on the beach. The French didn't. They regarded experienced seamen as a national asset and they were willing to pay for it.

And then there was better treatment in their ships, and better food. The whole atmosphere was "French." They are interested in food. Far better that way than the Germans or Scandinavians and, of course, the British.

It's the way the animal is raised.

It still makes me mad when I think that a man was supposed to work under those conditions--the food the owners put aboard some of those hungry limeys.

Old Bill Manning, my second mate in the MELROSE--sometimes mate--was in a number of British ships. He had started out as apprentice. Bill was well read, Dickens and Shakespeare and Wilkie Collins.

He told me about the Aberdeen White Star Line, and Circular Quay, and the CUTTY SARK alongside, a gilded vane in the shape of a short chemise, a "cutty sark", on top of her mainmast. This was long before I read about these ships in Basil Lubbock. Bill Manning had been brass-bounder in the BRILLIANT, a famous wool clipper. He was a gentleman and a fine sailor but troubled by the booze habit. Bill was in BRILLIANT when she threw her masts in the Southern Ocean and Captain Davidson got a silver tea set from Lloyds for rigging her up again at sea.

Bill told me about the food in the British merchant ships. A lump of gristle and grease and bone was brought to the fo'c's'le in a wooden tub. It would turn the stomach of a self-respecting dog. It smelled foul from the moment the head was removed from the barrel it came in. The cook could have trimmed off the slush -- the fat -- but no, it was hanging on the salt horse still when it was set down before the sailors.

The wooden tub this abomination was served in was called a "mess kit" or kid. It was the only article of furniture the owners supplied⁵ No table in the fo'c's'le; no benches -- sit on the sea chest you brought aboard! You only ate that food because you've got to eat something. The "peggy" fetched the mess kid. And the pea soup and the tea pot. But that's all he did; he didn't wash the dishes. When your plate got too thick with a rind of dried pea soup, you took your sheath knife and pared it off.

The German ships did not do much better in the barrelled meat department, at least the ones I was in. I never ate salt meat as long as I was in German ships, except in hash. For three years I lived without it. I couldn't stand the stench of it when the barrel was opened. I existed on pea soup, potatoes, and canned "boiled beef" which was served a couple of times a week.

5 The Cost Book from Russell's shipyard for the FALLS OF CLYDE lists under "Cooperage": one wash deck tub, one mess kid, and two harness casks.

IRONBARK, MESQUITE, and NEW ZEALAND CHRISTMAS TREES

Conversation with Fred Klebingat, Sept., 1965, 80 Merced

Years ago when steam schooners were running you had a great deal of ironbark on hand here--they lined the hatches with it.

It was pretty hard to saw--generally in shipyards it was kept in damp sand--green--so it wouldn't dry out.

In a Pacific Coast shipyard, when you talked about ironbark you meant a variety of eucalyptus--it is tough as hell. The grain, you might say, is confused--it locks this way and that way. It wears better than iron--you might pierce a piece of sheet metal, but you won't pierce this (as a hatch liner). It doesn't rust, it doesn't rot. The keel shoes, and in a steam schooner the guard where the ship rubbed against the pier were made of it.

In a schooner the toughest thing ^{was} ~~was~~ the trestle trees--they were ironbark. Before that they used oak, but it went to pieces with rot. Same as for the bolsters--ironbark doesn't dent, the rigging doesn't cut into it.

*

Now, take mesquite. In wooden bitts, they let in a corner of mesquite--that was what was most commonly used. Mesquite was better than ironbark in this way--it didn't check. On the S. N. CASTLE we had laurel bitts with inset mesquite corners. When you were mooring with wire, you used 2x8s (Douglas fir) around the bitts for chafing gear.

Any ship caulker wouldn't have anything but mesquite for his mallet.

*

New Zealand Christmas Trees (Capt Klebingat recommends these for the Victorian Park)

I've seen them growing on the beach with the salt water practically washing their roots. They grow on rocky capes, in any crack where they can get a grip. The New Zealand government had to pass a law to keep boat builders from cutting them for knees because the trunk developed a curve at the point where it emerged from the rock and bent upward. They made a perfect stem for a boat, for instance.

Wooden Ships and Iron Men -- A Misunderstanding

*Conversation with Captain Fred
Klebingat, K. K., 3/5/78 et seq.*

*Let me make some remarks about Wooden Ships and Iron Men.
It makes a good title for a book, but that's all you can say for that tired
old phrase.*

It is simply not true.

*They were throwing that "wooden ships and iron men" stuff around
in my first ship, the D. H. WATJEN (built of steel) and they should have
known better. That was in 1905.*

It should be "Iron Ships and Iron Men" -- or "Steel Ships and Iron Men."

*Wooden ships were far better sea boats than those iron and steel
tanks of later years. The decks of a wooden ship were seldom filled to the
rails with icy water. And they had larger crews to do the work.*

*Off watch, the sailors in wooden vessels were not subjected to the
miseries of life before the mast in an iron or steel Cape Horner. It was all
out of reason to expect men to work the ship on scanty food (if you can even
call it that) prepared by someone who happened to call himself a cook.*

Just imagine men surviving four hours and sometimes eight or more hours on flooded decks, wet to the skin, then retreating into a cave -- the fo'c's'le -- cold and clammy, water sloshing around, condensed perspiration dripping off the cold steel walls. The cook has not been able to serve them even a warm cup of tea. The bunks are damp and sodden. There is no place to dry your clothes or your oil skins.

It is a wonder they survived. No matter how miserable the living quarters in a wooden ship they weren't like that.

It angers me still that ship owners and ship masters were that callous that they housed men that way. A sailing ship owner wouldn't stable his cattle in such a place.

The British ships were the worst -- and the most numerous. "Starvation and ease" we used to say about them. They did not push their men as hard as the Yanks or Germans.*

*Wood versus steel . . . (I am speaking about the old days) with more men on a watch work on deck was a little easier in a wooden ship. And a great deal safer. A deep-laden steel ship was like a half-tide rock. The fancy wooden panelling and stained glass windows that I saw in BIG BONANZA** in her old age (she was a barge for Charles Nelson Co. by that time) would never have lasted in a steel Cape Horner. This was in the poop bulkhead -- the name BIG BONANZA was spelled out in stained glass. Of course, there were shutters to protect these ornamental windows, but still all this fancy wooden construction would never have lasted on the deck of a steel Cape Horner.*

Take the four-masted bark ANNA, built in Scotland as the OTTERBURN, 2500 tons. The poop bulkhead was formed of steel plates.

* "Easy and hungry." -- Eric Swanson

** Built in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1875.

right across with only two little square holes, three feet square, located more than halfway up. There was a handrail over these holes that you grabbed to swing yourself in. A down-Easter like the BIG BONANZA or PACTOLUS would have had wooden doors that you walked into comfortably like you were walking into a house.

I include a drawing of the break of the poop of the ANNA.

Old Billy Manning, who had served in all kinds of wooden and steel and iron ships never made that "wooden ships and iron men" comparison. He knew better.

There was only one feature where the wooden ships were almost uniformly worse. They leaked and they had to be pumped, the task a sailor hates most. To this day, I wonder how they managed to keep ships like the SHENANDOAH dry (although there is a picture of her sister the ROANOKE, in later years, with a windmill pump rigged). The coal schooner WYOMING, just as big, is a different matter -- she had steam pumps and plenty of coal to run them.

No, the comparison is wrong -- they were all iron men.

But let us shift our viewpoint to the other end of the vessel. To the captain, a steel ship and steel rigging had its advantages.

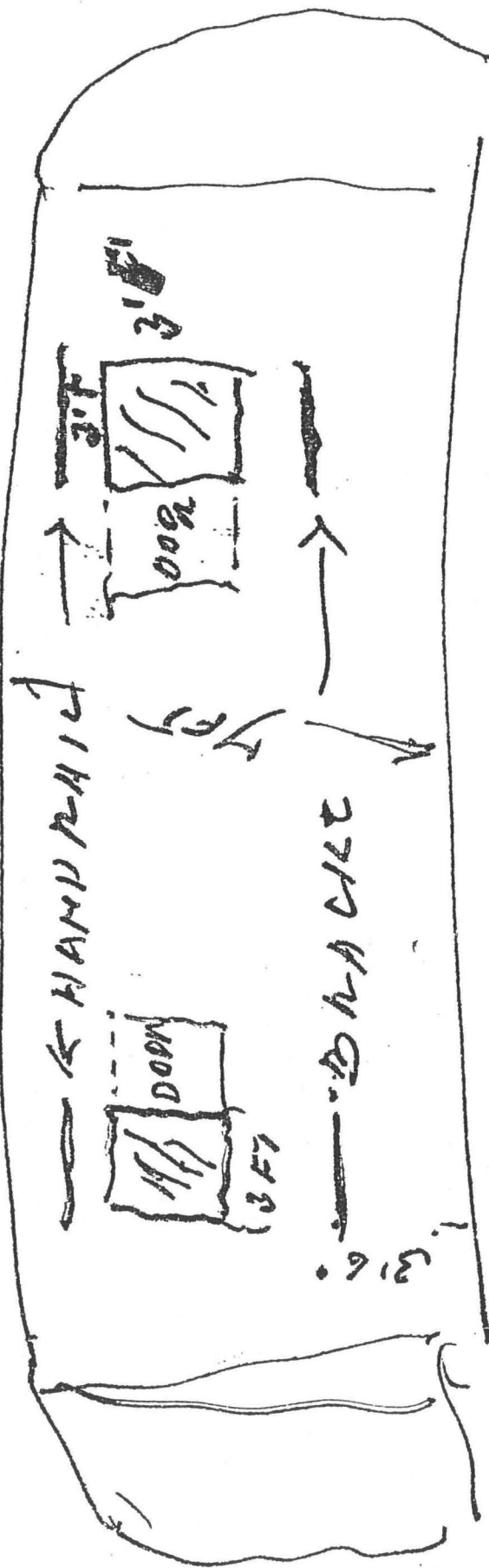
Fifty years after the clippers were gone, the Hamburg skippers drove their ships around the Horn just as hard as "Bully" Waterman.

The desire to make speed was the same.

When it came to the urge to push a vessel along, the clipper captains had nothing on the Flying P line skippers. But pine spars and hemp rigging -- you have to admire the shipmasters who had to contend with that stuff. Back in the days of the clipper ships they did not have the benefit of steel masts stayed with steel. I don't see to this day how they did it.

To offset the disadvantage of wooden masts and hemp backstays, the clipper ships had tremendous crews . . . more than a hundred men in a ship like the SOVERIGN OF THE SEAS, not much bigger than BALCLUTHA. Those men were there not just to handle sail, but to struggle with the stretching and flexibility of fiber cordage.

DOOR



DEC 11

IN ORDER TO GET INTO THE CABIN
ON AIRC LDC LEE YOU GOT HOLD OF THE
HANDRAIL ABOVE THE DOOR, STEPPED
ONTO THE WOODEN BRACKET, AND
THEN SWING YOUR LEGS THROUGH
THE OPENING

It is an interesting contrast.

*The Flying P skipper worked with less men, but this was offset by the advantage of steel rigging and better canvas. And brace winches. In particular, brace winches. Halliard winches were labor savers, too, but they were slow affairs. **

* *Tom Wells, standing at the wheel of the PASSAT, noted that it took 350 turns of the halliard winch handle to hoist an upper topsail.*
K. K.

11
The Redoubtable Captain Schutt

In my time in German ships, 1905 to the spring of 1908, Schutt was skipper of the KURT, later called the MOSHULU, and a tough nut he was. I do not consider all German skippers to be paragons of virtue, even though I happened to strike two good ones in Gerdes and Koester. But that guy Schutt should have been in charge of a hardcase down-Easter. He was as bad as those birds, or would have been if he could have got away with it.

It is true that he made fast passages. And also that he paid some of his men well.

Schutt was born at Darser Ort, a place on the peninsula of Zingst just south of the island of Rugen in the Baltic. Our "Stuerman" on the ANNA, Gau (pronounced Gow), was raised in the same place and he told me about him. Gau knew Schutt very well, also his father and his family. Quite a few seamen hailed from Zingst and Dars and Darser Ort. In those days it belonged to the Prussian province of Pommern; it is now in the East German Republic.

Schutt first went to sea in his father's vessel in the Baltic trade. ~~But he soon left, remarking:~~

~~"If I want to sail with a son-of-a-bitch, I can do it somewhere else. I do not have to sail with you!"~~

Schutt was one of those who pushed things to the limit. If it worked -- that is, if luck was with him, the ship made money and he made money.

There is the case of the KURT in Newcastle. You need so much coal -- stiffening -- to keep the vessel from capsizing. A certain amount was available immediately, but not enough. One skipper turned it down as insufficient for his vessel -- he would rather wait for the right amount. But Schutt took it, although he should have taken in two hundred tons more. It was risky, but he took a chance. But the result was that he got quicker dispatch -- he got a cargo of coal sooner than anyone else -- the harbor was full of ships anxious to get to the loading berth. It is that kind of man who makes fast passages, too.

It was risky, but Schutt didn't make any bones about it. It was the gossip when I was there. The mates knew there wasn't enough stiffening in her for a ship for that size, the sailors knew it -- there are tables aboard. It was the common talk aboard the ships.

Stiffening kept the vessel upright -- it may be ballast, it may be cargo. When I was mate of the STAR OF POLAND and we had

arrived in Manila and were discharging, I mentioned to Captain Larsen that we were getting pretty high out of the water.

"Tell them to quit until they give you 800 tons of cargo," he told me.

We were due to load sugar and when they had put 800 tons of bagged sugar on board, I started to discharge cargo again. This sugar was not secured -- you don't secure stiffening in harbor.

In the ANNA, in Brooklyn in 1906, they came along with a couple of barges of case oil as stiffening while we were still discharging the cargo of chalk from France. We then shifted to Bayonne and loaded a full cargo of case oil.

Schutt cut corners in the KURT again when he discharged his coal cargo on the West Coast. He was taking in ballast at one of those nitrate ports as the coal went out. He had reached 1200 tons, but he was still short several hundred tons. Now he learned that he would have to wait a few days to get the full amount, probably 1600 tons. There were some Catholic holidays coming up and the lancheros would not be working.

That did not suit Schutt at all. He was bound across the Pacific for Newcastle, N.S.W. So he simply sailed short of the amount of ballast required to give KURT adequate stability. All went well in the southeast trades. He carried all sail; all the yards were crossed. But nearing Australia the weather turned bad. The ship was plainly too tender and he got cold feet. There was danger of capsizing.

Schutt ordered all three royal yards sent down and stowed in the hold and the same with the lower topgallants. Anything of any weight around the decks, tanks and so on, was put down below. He got that big four-masted bark safely into port and . . . once again he was ahead of the game.

I believe that Schutt ^{triple space} had command later in Siemers' steamers. There is a photograph of him in the book Preussen Konigin der Meere. (Preussen, King of the Sea.) The San Francisco Maritime Museum has a copy.

~~He left command of the~~
SUSANNA to take the KURT. ~~that~~
If I might point out that I was
with SUSANNA the following year
in Port Talbot Wales, my first
voyage, with D. H. WARREN. ~~the~~
~~SUSANNA~~
~~we returned to SUSANNA as she~~
~~put to sea~~

Why I am Not a Member of the Masonic Lodge

Over the years I have been recommended for membership in the Masonic Lodge. In San Francisco, I always dealt with the firm of J. Cohen & Co., waterfront tailors. Julius Mendelson, who had married J. Cohen's daughter recommended me several times. But always my stay at San Francisco was too short.

And so it was in about 1922 that we were laid up at Port Angeles, Washington with the American Schooner MELROSE of which I was the skipper, and Shorty Adermann was chief mate. Tom Bayton, a Shriner and a good friend of ours, recommended both of us, and we both sent in seventy-five dollars initiation fee.

Now I was doing business with the Puget Sound Mills & Timber Co., a Chas. Nelson outfit. They were supposed to advance me funds when I needed it. In the office the manager was a man by the name of Johnson (known as "Black Johnson" by those that did not like him, and who had recently joined the lodge). He was detailed by the lodge to be on the investigating committee.

It happened that I came into the office to draw some money and Johnson said, "Klebingat -- funny name..."

I replied, "That may be so. But take 'Johnson'. Any old fool can sport around with a name like Johnson. Now if that was my name, people would ask 'What Johnson do you mean . . . ?'"

'Dogface Johnson' or 'Firewood Johnson'?

'Drawbucket Johnson' or 'Sleepy Johnson'?

Or "Black Johnson", the heavy weight champion."

The office staff burst out laughing. I had said this loud enough that the stenographers could hear it.

Well, so it came to pass that Adermann was admitted to the lodge, and my check was returned to me. It did not take much of an imagination to know who gave me the Black Ball

Fred K. Klebingat, 1976

"Dogface Johnson": Commodore skipper of the Matson fleet in 1920.

"Firewood Johnson": A schooner skipper who made some extra dough peddling his firewood at San Pedro.

"Drawbucket Johnson". A tugboat skipper at Greys Harbor.

"Sleepy Johnson": Skipper of the four masted schooner RUTH E. GODFREY. He went missing on a voyage from Tocopilla to Greys Harbor.

Klebingat

When you're running a ship, your horsepower is this . . . arms!

Conversation with Fred Klebingat, "Icy"
Helgason, K.K., 8/25/62, et seq.

Klebingat: "The briquets weighed twenty-five pounds. All day you are down in the hold—a human conveyor belt. They are made of coal dust held together with coal tar. The sweat pours down your face; pretty soon the skin starts to go. You wipe your sweaty eyes with the back of your hand. The coal tar starts to take effect. Your eyes start to swell up; you are all puffy. So you go to the hospital, or you get a change of scene by working the dolly winch.

"My pay as deck boy was ten marks (1,000 pfennig) a month—equivalent to \$2.50—or \$.0815 cents a day. For two hours overtime discharging briquettes I got 60 pfennig (15 cents), or almost twice my daily wage. This was Bremen pay, and by a good company. Out of Hamburg you might have got half as much.

"Under German law the regular day's work in the tropics when ship was in port was eight hours, 10 hours in the temperate ones. Overtime was paid for hours worked beyond that. This rule was long in advance of U.S. laws on the matter.

"Why did you find young fellows working for so little? For one reason only. Nobody stayed there unless he had in mind becoming an officer. This was the route to follow if you were coming to the poop deck by way of the hawse pipe. (There were no apprentices in German ships; the cadet ships—training vessels—took care of that.) Remember, you had to have one year as Able Seaman in sail before you could get your license. To be an Able Seaman for one year meant maybe three years working up to it.

"If you didn't have in mind becoming an officer, there was no point in going to sea as deck boy in German sailing ships. It was an easier life in steam."

About the BRITISH ISLES * Rounding of the Horn in 1905

Klebingat: "Don't forget, I was there. When she came in. And the word travelled—maybe thirty ships in the anchorage, no newspapers, no radio. Nothing else to talk about. How did we hear? Well maybe somebody goes to the hospital.

" ' Captain, the coal dust has got my eyes. They're all puffed up, I can't see. '

* See account of this voyage in the book The Cape Horn Breed by Capt. Wm. H.S. Jones, 1956. Capt. Jones is a marine surveyor in Melbourne. Upon reading this book, Capt. Klebingat sent him a copy of the SUSANNA's 1905 Cape Horn track that he obtained from Capt. Piening.

" ' All right, go to the hospital. ' "

"And in the hospital are those poor guys from the BRITISH ISLES. Legs frozen, arms frozen . . dying. If that had been a German ship, Captain Barker would have done time .

"When you're running a ship, your horsepower is this . . arms! (Gesturing)

"When you let your men get frozen . . legs and frozen arms . . there is no reason for it.

"There's some dry place on the ship where you can keep them dry . . the sail locker was dry; they always tried to keep that dry.

"Barker didn't have any frozen arms and legs, did he ?

"Those poor fellows didn't last very long in the hospital in Pisagua.

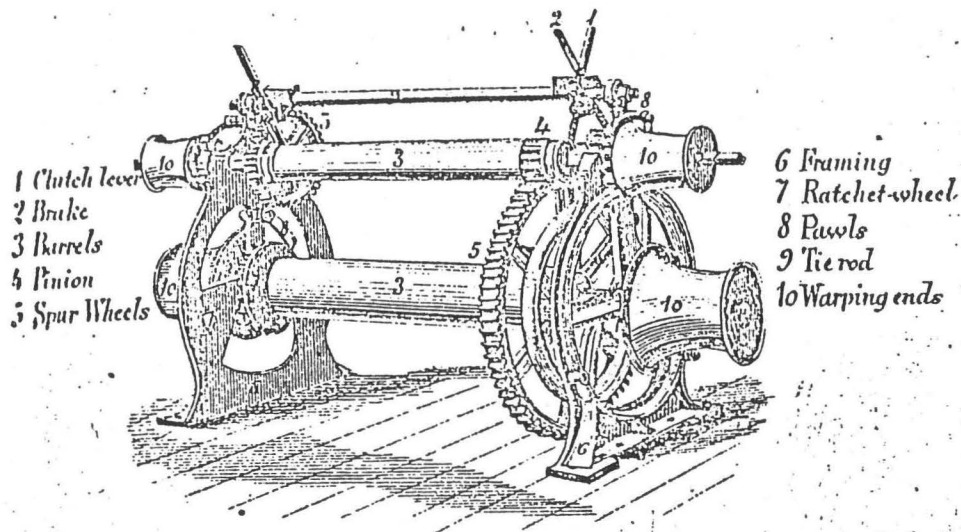
"A horse would get better treatment than that. They probably didn't even have a doctor, for all you know. Those places in Chile . . . just a bunch of wooden shacks. "

Helgason: "If you were a Lutheran, something like that, they almost spat on you. "

Klebingat: "And then Barker making the apprentices wait half the night without supper, after a day's work, while he goes ship visiting . . hanging around hungry in the boat. Nothing like that on the D.H. WATJEN. There was a law; eight hours work in the tropics. At least as far as the deck boys were concerned. Do you think that after I'd been working discharging briquets all day, there would be boat work at night? Not a chance of it. "

Dolly Winches

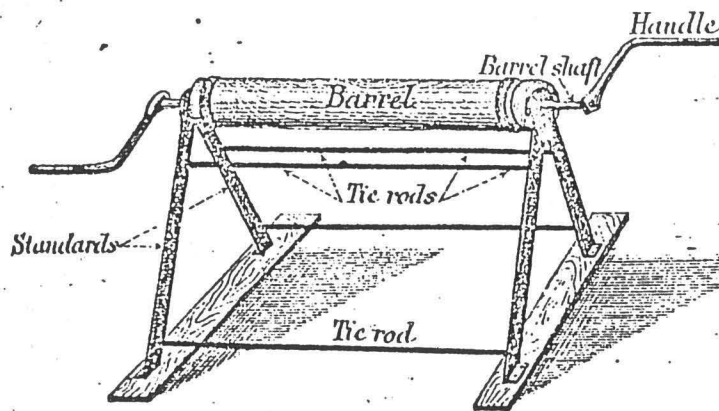
Conversation with Capt Fred Klebingat
over telephone from Americana Hotel,
K. K. at home, 4/14/67



That hand winch bolted on deck permanently near the fore hatch that you saw on the older sailing vessels was usually there when they had no donkey engine. It was the only piece of machinery that they had! You found such a winch on a hand-puller like the D.H. WATJEN. But we didn't use it for cargo--too slow. What we used were dolly winches, which didn't have any gears to slow them down.

We usually had two or three dolly winches aboard, maybe more. At sea, they were kept down in the forward 'tween deck--generally they were standing near a hatch for easy getting out. Three or four men could handle one. When you got the thing on deck you kept it in place with any weight you happened to have, usually bags of nitrate or coal.

Illustrations from Capt. H. Paasch
From Keel to Truck, 1885



Very simple affairs, a base made of planks, some upright angle irons in a "V", a wooden barrel with an axle through it . . a couple of handles, the brake a piece of rope over the barrel. When you let go the handles were flapping around . . they acted as flywheels. You had to look out that they didn't hit you on the nose.

The lancerro alongside hooks the fall to a strop around the bag.

"Up!" On the dolly winch handles you are not just playing; you are not at this point wiping your brow. You go like maniacs . . crank it up!

There are five men to a gang, one relieving . . in other words you get a spell after you have cranked up sixty sacks. You've got to spell* each other, or you will break yourself up. Hard work!

When your sack of nitrate is up, the second mate hollers "Stop!" He is standing on a platform between the hatch and the rail. In his left hand he has a hook that belongs to the burton. He gets hold of the dolly winch fall with his right hand and with his left inserts into the strop this burton hook. The hook is just a right angle with a sharp point, specially made, shiny - it becomes slippery.

The burton man watches him, sets tight his burton,

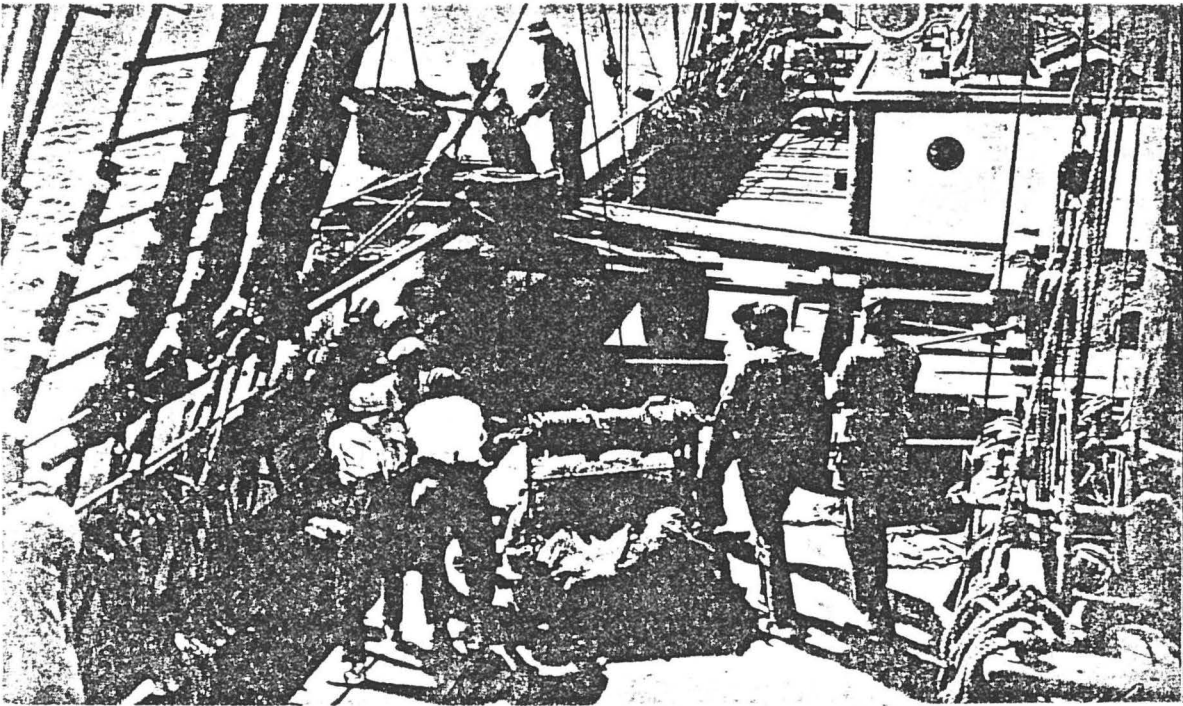
"Let go!" hollers the second mate.

You let go the winch handles--the bag rushes like hell into the burton. At the same time that the second mate yells "Let go!" he pulls out the dolly hook with a yank--it took strength. With the same motion he gave a pull to get the dolly winch spinning (unwinding) and shot the hook down into the hands of the lancerro who was waiting for it.

With the rope around the drum we braked the winch at the moment the lancerro seized the hook. Meanwhile the burton man was lowering the bag down the hatch onto the table in the hold.

*You make up how often you will spell each other among yourselves. Same as on a neck pump. You say there, "I'll take twenty (or thirty) strokes." The other fellow agrees. It's up to you.

Steel bark INVERCAULD, built 1891, Glasgow



↑
Dolly Winch

↑
Geared hand winch, not being used.

This winch is permanently bolted to deck forward of the mast.

"The b'y with the t'y" --Ernest Tetzlaff, carpenter on the FALLS OF CLYDE

Conversation with Capt. Klebingat, K. K.
Maritime Museum, 1963, et seq.

Blockmaking our carpenter had down to a fine art. Automation, well Tetzlaff knew all about it. When he made blocks he turned them out by the hundreds and hundreds. There never was a block with a cracked shell on board the FALLS OF CLYDE while Tetzlaff was carpenter. When he left, there was a supply that lasted the ship for years.

He appears in this photograph of part of the crew on the foc's'lehead. On the extreme left, sitting, is Emil Dorsch, the pumpman. Standing, the second from left, is Carl Tetzlaff. Next to him with cap, man by the name of Schlemme, and next to him a man called Fietz. The names of the others I do not recall. Note the chain tack and the rope sheet, also that the deck of the foc's'lehead was not in as good shape as the poop.

What Ernest (his name was actually Carl) did was to go to work and make himself block-making machinery. He had already made a lathe. He fitted a circular saw blade on the arbor of this lathe, held by a pair of washers that he had filed at an angle. This caused the saw to flop forth and back as it spun. The plank from which he was going to make the block cheeks he ran across the lathe bed and under this cutter. The wobbling saw blade routed out the groove for the iron block strap.

Next he put the two routed boards--they were birch--face to face, with the necessary spacers, and lightly tacked it all together. He had patterns cut out for all the different block sizes and the placement of the holes; these he now marked out on his sandwich. The one unit might yield him five or six blocks--it depended on their size. But at this point it was still one, and now he did the drilling.

He fitted the drill in the lathe chuck and worked the tail stock to press the sandwich against the revolving drill. The drill was equipped with a counter-sink at its base which made a recess for the flat washer for the

rivets. He turned the thing over and counter-sunk the other side. Then he changed drills and made a larger hole for the pin. All quick, quickly done.

Then he cut off the blocks in lengths. Next to the bandsaw. He had made the bandsaw himself. It consisted of two large solid wooden wheels which were slightly concave on the rim--that part was lined with leather. There was an upper wheel and a lower wheel, the usual arrangement. A solid shaft went through the center of each of them and on either side was a block of lignum vitae that formed a bearing for this shaft. The blocks of lignum vitae in turn moved up and down on a vertical shaft on each side to adjust the blade tension. Their position was fixed by a set screw. This was on the upper wheel.

Power came from a little gasoline engine under the work bench, which also ran the lathe. This connected directly with the lower wheel of the bandsaw which itself was under the workbench.

His first blade he made by filing teeth in a spring from an alarm clock. From Ernest I learned the art of brazing a broken bandsaw blade--you beat a dime thin, add a little flux, and then hold it in place between the broken ends with red hot pincers.

Later he got regular bandsaw blades. With the bandsaw he cut out the shape of the block--both cheeks, the whole block at once. Finally a few strokes with a drawknife, a little smoothing, and there you were. . . I tell you I reckoned I was pretty clever, but I was jealous when I saw that. Tetzlaff made his own straps--he was a good blacksmith, too.

Capt. Smith called Ernest Tetzlaff the "b'y with the t'y" (boy with the toy), making fun of him, although he had no quarrel with his product. As I say, we had blocks by the hundred, all hanging up in the lazarette. You just went and picked the size you needed.

It's not that I was so fond of him--that's the guy who used to measure the whiskey left in the bottle when he left for work in the morning; Jack

Dickerhoff and I were batching with him in Alameda at the time. Tetzlaff had bought an old shingle cottage just above the shipyard on Schiller St. He used to take his rule out of his pocket just before going out the door-- he had a job as a sawyer in the yard and Jack and I were out of work. After he left the FALLS OF CLYDE, Ernest had gone to work for Robertson up at Benicia building the ORONITE and LA MERCED; he also worked up there on the five masted schooner ROSE MAHONEY.

He was one of those guys who could fall into a cesspool and come up wearing diamonds. One time I built a garage for him. I told him it was too small.

"Never mind, all I'm ever going to own is a Chevy."

He came along one day with \$10 worth of tickets in an Eagle's Lodge raffle. I said, "Alright, I'll take half of them. . ."

"No, I think I'll keep them."

About a month later he asked another fellow in the shipyard who had won the raffle.

"Somebody on Schiller St."

"That's me."

So I had to go to work with a crowbar and enlarge that Chevrolet garage.

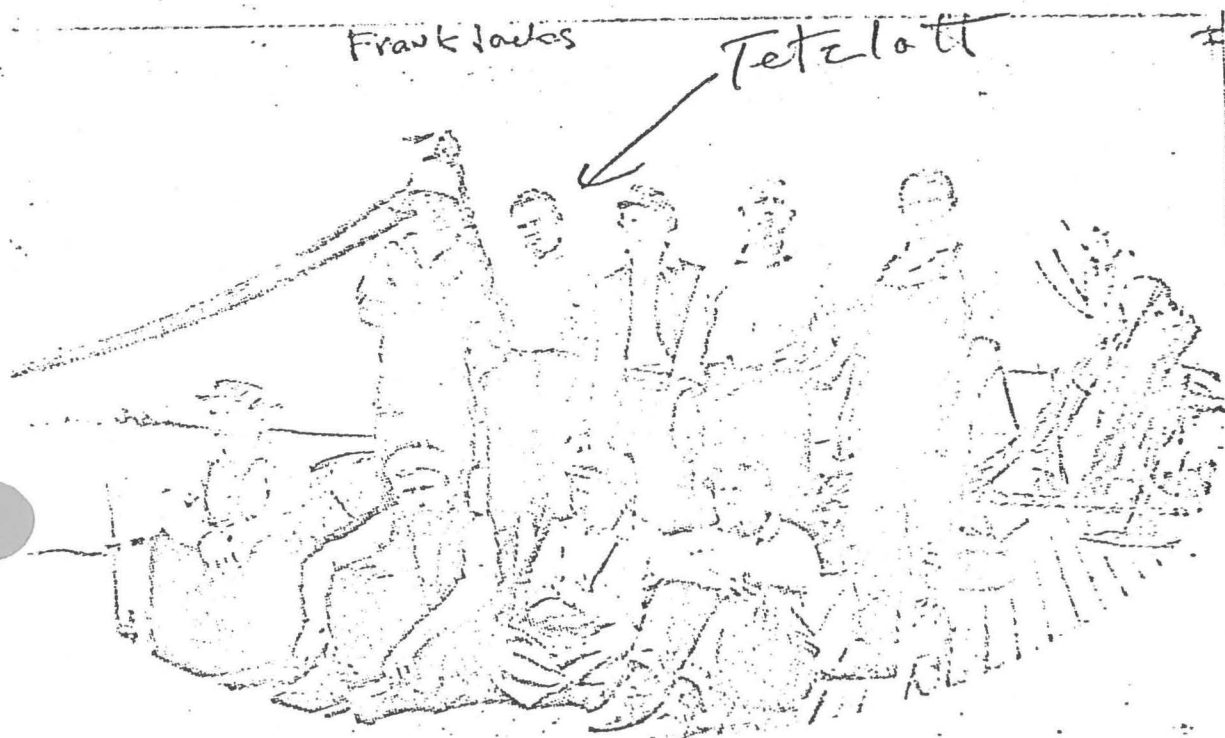
He bought a house on Grant St. for \$4000 close behind the Alaska Packers yard. Standing all by itself in the vegetable gardens. He was going to live in the basement, and I worked for him fixing it up.

Then the Packers got in touch with him. They needed the site for a spur track into the yard. They gave him \$8000. The fellow who had sold it to him six months before pretty near died.

Tetzlaff was born in Bromberg, and he learned his trade as "stellmacher" or wheelwright. He got into shipwright work later on. He was carpenter in the SWANHILDA when she was lost off the Strait of Le Maire. Half the crew was lost in the wreck. ✓

The last few years of his life were spent at Noyo, a fishing village about a hundred miles north of San Francisco, where he owned an abalone fishing outfit. Ernest was a man who could turn his hand to anything. He was always lucky and he made a lot of money, but I do not think he was very rich when he died. He hated to put money out. He left his estate to a nephew.

✓ See account of wreck of SWANHILDA following from Basil Lubbock's Last of the Windjammers.



There are many unlucky things that you can do aboard a ship, and many persons or animals which it is considered unlucky to have aboard a ship. The best known subjects, of course, are hares and parsons; but there is a superstition of the sea which seems to be borne out by hard fact. Not only is the captain's wife unlucky, but over and over again in the case of shipwreck she is the only person lost. On one occasion two ships collided off the pitch of the Horn. They were swept beam to beam in the hollow between two immense Cape Horn greybeards. The captain of one of them, thinking that his ship was going to be sunk by the collision, attempted, just before their contact, to throw his wife aboard the other vessel. She fell between the two ships and was crushed to death, being the only person in either ship to receive any injury.

This train of thought has been aroused by the fact that the *Swanhilda* was lost in 1910 on a passage from Cardiff to the West Coast, when her young captain, Pine, had his wife aboard, and was in fact making a honeymoon trip of it.

Sailing from Cardiff on March 15, all went well until 5 p.m. on May 6 when, in misty rainy weather with a heavy sea running,

land was unexpectedly sighted right ahead, and within half a mile. The ship was immediately wore on to the starboard tack and braced sharp up with her head to the nor'west so as to get clear. After a little while the heavy mist lifted sufficiently to show Cape St. Anthony close on the port bow. Both the heavy sea and a strong current were setting the ship on to the Cape. It was immediately recognised that the *Swanhilda* would not go clear, and the captain gave orders for the lifeboats to be swung out. Before this could be done the vessel struck heavily broadside on.

The starboard life-boat was swung out first, and in the confusion of the moment fourteen of the crew and the master and his wife scrambled into it. It was then lowered with such haste and so unevenly that it was up-ended and shot its occupants into the water, eleven of them, including the captain and his wife, being drowned. The other five, including a man who lost his reason, succeeded in making a landing through the surf.

Meanwhile the port life-boat was safely lowered, and with the thirteen remaining members of the crew on board was pulled out to sea until daylight. This boat succeeded in reaching New Year's Island after thirty strenuous hours, during which one of its occupants died of exposure.

The lighthouse-keepers on New Year's Island sent a wireless message to the mainland which brought an Argentine Government transport to the rescue.

At the subsequent inquiry the mate of the *Swanhilda* was asked why he had not gone to the help of the drowning people of the starboard boat. His reply was that the boat and the drowning men had been washed into the breakers, and he did not consider it advisable to endanger the lives of those in his boat in attempting what he considered to be an impossible rescue. The mate explained the curious fact of the captain leaving the ship in the first boat by saying that the captain's wife was young and very frightened and refused to get into the boat unless he came with her.

The senior apprentice, who was acting as third mate and only the previous year had suffered shipwreck off the Horn when serving in the *Deccan*, said that he and two others had been lowered to the water in the port life-boat. After the falls were unhooked the

life-boat was swept away from the ship, and they had a job in getting alongside again. Whilst they were adrift and having great difficulty in keeping off the rocks themselves, he saw the starboard boat driven into the surf.

The bosun in his evidence declared that he stopped one man from getting into the starboard life-boat before the captain's wife, but that the captain said to him, "Let them get in. She will not go till I go."

Some time afterwards an Argentine gunboat made a search of Staten Island, and discovered the bodies of four men. These, who were of the starboard boat's crew, had evidently got ashore safely through the surf, but afterwards died of starvation. The insane man was found alive in a cave, and eventually recovered his senses. He declared that he had lost his reason when he had found the bodies of Captain Pine and his bride, washing to and fro in the surf, but still locked in each other's arms. He said that he and the other four had lived for some time on tins of grease, and when the grease was exhausted resorted to shellfish.

The wreck of the *Swanhilda* seems under the circumstances to have been unavoidable, but the loss of life was certainly needless, for the ship showed no signs of breaking up, and if only her company had remained aboard until the weather moderated they would all have been saved.

"Hinemoa's" Fatal Ballast.

The beautiful *Hinemoa*, which was built by Russell in 1890 to the order of John Leslie, was fitted with freezing machinery for the frozen mutton trade from New Zealand.

Though she was a handy, well-behaved ship with a very good turn of speed, she suffered from ill-luck from the very start. Many declared that a curse had been put upon her, which chiefly affected her masters and her freights.

On her first voyage when she was commanded by Captain R. de Steiger, who, it is said, was a German baron, four of her apprentices died at Lyttelton from typhoid, the germs of which were believed to have been in her ballast. This ballast was rubble from an old London burial ground, and it was most unlucky stuff,



THE CAPE HORNER JOURNAL

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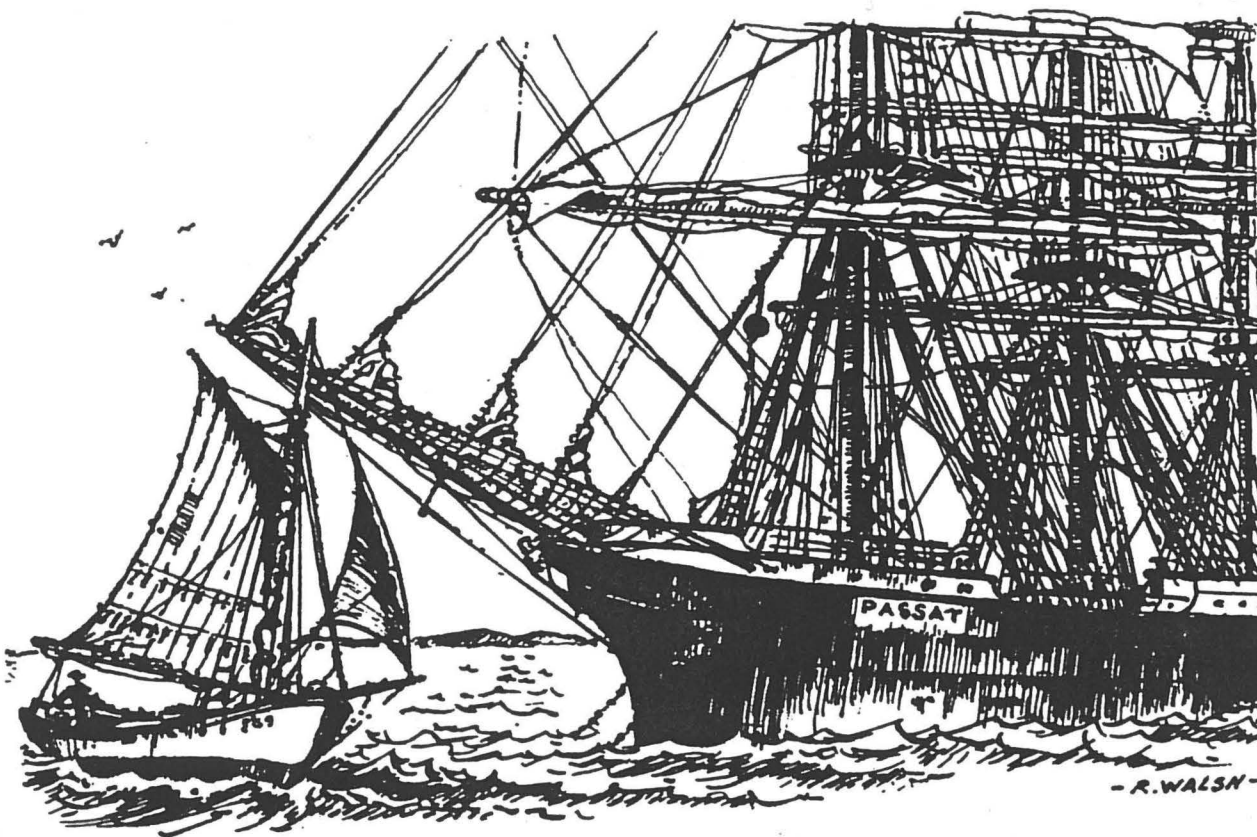
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(FOUNDED ADELAIDE, 1959)



Swan held

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NEW MEMBER, WILLIAM YOUNG, 14 CAMP ROAD, PINJARRA, W.A. 6208:

He is part of a story, "British Ship Lost, in 1910" --

"Brief messages received in England report a serious disaster on the South American coast to a British ship, the sailing barque *Swanhilda*, which ran ashore at Staten Island, and has become a total wreck. Fourteen lives have been lost. The men saved have been landed at Punta Arenas, Chile. Those saved; H. R. Lewis 1st mate, J. Berry sailmaker, W. Martin AB, S. Boyle AB, J.E. Bowers AB, R. Berry sailor, T. H. Phillips sailor, Carl Nelson sailor, K. Freeman sailor, W. F. Wilkinson AB, J. Wilson sailor, J. Piedboous cook and apprentices W.F. Young, E.A. Brown and H. Pickering. Those drowned; J.H. Butt 2nd mate, A. Jenkins, C. Carlsen, A.T. Morstadt, C. Snyder, A. Hooper, A. Anderson, J.G. Hughes and apprentices S.J. Waldron, W.A. Lowe, W. Lodge and A.G. Pyne Master and his wife.

The *Swanhilda* was on her way from Cardiff to Antofagasta laden with coal. She left Cardiff on March 15, 1910, and was spoken to three or four times on the voyage. The apprentice, A.E. Jones, belonged to Leyton, and was wrecked on his previous voyage in the *Deccan*, the crew being rescued from an uninhabited island near Terra del Fuego by a sailing ship after being 10 days without food, except some shell fish and a few biscuits washed up from the wreck. His father is a schoolmaster at Leyton. Percy Waldron was the only son of the landlady of the Cross Keys, Totten, near Southampton. He was an apprentice to navigation and 18 years old.

The Inquiry was opened (but it is too long to report in detail):

"SWANHILDA"

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a Formal Investigation held at the Magistrates' Room, Dale Street, Liverpool, on the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 23rd and 24th days of August, 1910, before JOHN KINGHORN, Esquire, Acting Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Vice-Admiral MARRACK and Captain SINCLAIR LOUITT and Captain THOMAS, into the circumstances attending the stranding and abandonment of the British sailing ship "*SWANHILDA*" of Glasgow (Official Number 97669), at or near Cape St. Anthony, Staten Island, Tierra del Fuego, on the 16th DAY OF MAY, 1910, whereby loss of life ensued.

Report of Court

The Court having carefully inquired into the circum-

stances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds for the reasons stated in the Annex hereto, that the stranding and abandonment of the ship *Swanhilda* were caused by an error of judgment of her master

- (a) By his over-running his distance.
- (b) By his neglect to use the lead to check his position, and by his steering and continuing a course leading directly on Staten Island in thick weather until it was too late to avoid stranding his vessel on it.

The loss of life which ensued, with the exception of one man who died from exposure in the port lifeboat, was due to the mishap which occurred to the starboard lifeboat whilst it was being lowered into the water with the greater part of the crew already in her.

Dated this 24th day of August, 1910. JOHN KINGHORN, Judge.

Young Croydonian's Thrilling Story of the *Swanhilda* Disaster...

A FATAL HONEYMOON TRIP:- A thrilling story of the romance and the tragedy of the sea was told to a "Croydon Chronicle" representative a few days ago by a young Croydon man who had a most marvellous escape from drowning when the ill-fated barque, the *Swanhilda*, was lost off Cape Horn a few weeks ago. The narrator of the tale is William Young, a tall well-set-up young fellow, with the bronzed complexion and blue eyes that one always associates with the seamen, and he is now recuperating after his terrible experiences at his father's house, the Hare and Hounds, the well known Wadden hostelry. Mr. Young, who is only 19 years of age, adopted the sea as a profession three years ago, when he spent twenty-eight months on his first voyage, trading principally to the South American ports. In February last he was ordered to join the *Swanhilda* at Antwerp, where she was loading up a cargo of patent fuel for Antofagasta, Chile. She was a trim, well-found barque of 1,998 tons register, owned by Heron & Co., of Fenchurch Avenue, London. She was commanded by Capt. Pyne, a native of West Norwood, and carried a crew of 28, the only passenger being the captain's wife, who had only recently been married, and who was going on what might be called a honeymoon trip -- a trip which, unfortunately, had a most tragic termination.

"On March 14 the *Swanhilda* left Cardiff on what proved to be her last voyage. All went well, and fair seas and auspicious winds marked the voyage until within about 60 miles of Cape Horn. "For two days," said William Young, "there had been no sun, as it was winter there at that time. The captain had not been able to take observations, and we relied on dead

reckoning. We tried to make out the light on New Year Islands. It was bitterly cold with a chilly rain and sleet coming down in the mist. About six o'clock on the night of May 16 we suddenly sighted land - Staten Island - and it was quite evident that in the bad weather we had overrun our distance. We were in a bay with the wind driving on to the land, and to strike against the rocks was inevitable. The captain had ordered the boats to be got out when we struck. The port boat was got ready first, and the chief officer was to have charge of it, but it broke adrift with only three men in it, and we gave them up as lost.

"I got into the starboard lifeboat, and the captain gave orders to all the men who were left on the ship to get into the boat. They said they wouldn't get into it as it wasn't their boat. The captain said he would be the last man to leave the ship, and he directed his wife to enter the boat. 'I won't go without you', she cried, and clung to him. At last the captain called out that, as his wife would not leave without him, he would accompany us if we did not object. The captain then handed his wife into the boat, and, having got in himself, gave the order to lower the boat, which was in the davits. When the after fall was let go the boat got on her beam ends, and as soon as she touched the water the captain, his wife, and an apprentice were shot out of the boat. I got a boat-hook and managed to hook the apprentice back to the boat again. Bad as we thought we had been, our troubles were only beginning, for in getting away the for'ard fall we struck a rock astern of the ship. We then heard the cries of the captain and his wife, but we couldn't go to their assistance as we had no oars in the boat, as they had fallen overboard when the boat was on her beam ends. We drifted a little further away from the ship, when we sighted the other lifeboat, which was nearly on the rocks. We just passed this boat when we got right on the rocks ourselves, and our boat capsized, pitching us all out into the water," William said.

"It was then a case of every man for himself; I struck out for the shore, which was about 300 yards off. It was a terrible job to cover the distance, encumbered as I was by having all my clothes on and also my heavy sea-boots, but the lifebelt helped me, and although much exhausted, I reached the shore and landed on Staten Island. The cook, the sailmaker, and one of the sailors named Snyder, also managed to swim ashore. The four of us who got ashore had lifebelts on; the remainder who had not lifebelts were drowned. It was terribly risky work getting ashore, as the island is

fringed around with sharp, jagged rocks, but I managed to get ashore without injury from the rocks. The sea was intensely cold, and although I was only about 20 minutes in the water the toes of my right foot were frost-bitten. I was wringing my clothes out to dry them when Snyder said he was going for a tramp up the mountains. I tried to dissuade him from going, and begged him to remain with the rest of us. He wouldn't listen to my appeals, and went off in the direction of the mountains, and we never saw him again. The island is about 35 miles long by nine miles broad. It was formerly a convict station, but is now uninhabited. The island is absolutely barren, and there is nothing in the way of food. There are some 200 goats, which have been left there to provide food for castaways, but we were not aware of this until some days had elapsed."

William went on, "We had to live as best we could on moss and a barrel of fat, which was washed ashore from the wreck. The only sign of life about the island was a quantity of sea eagles, but they cannot be eaten. We had no means of kindling a fire, and, as for drink, the melted snow from the hills provided us with a supply of water. A number of articles from the deckhouses and the galley were washed ashore, but as we had no means of lighting a fire they were not much use to us. We had some matches, but they were soaked through, and we tried to dry them by holding them against our breasts, but it was no use.

"We landed on the island on the morning of Monday, May 16th. On the Thursday following our hopes were raised when the Argentine transport passed the island. We waved signals and shouted in an endeavour to attract the attention of those on board the vessel, but it was no good, and she steamed on. We were more successful when the transport was returning on the following day. We managed to attract their notice, and they sent a boat ashore. We were glad to find in the boat the chief officer and bo'sun of the *Swanhilda*, who we thought were drowned. We then heard what had become of the other boat in which the chief officer and the bo'sun were. They had managed to reach the lighthouse, where they were picked up and cared for until they were taken off.

"There was a tragic incident among this boat's crew. One of the sailors, a Swede, went suddenly mad, and died in the boat before they reached the lighthouse. The bodies of Capt. Pyne, Mrs. Pyne, and 12 of the crew were washed ashore and buried in Staten Island. Mrs. Pyne's remains were interred in an old cemetery 28 miles away from where

the remains of her husband were laid to rest. There is only one human being who lives within an easy distance of Staten Island. He is an old man, and he lives by himself on a small island about 5½ miles away from Staten Island. His business is to look after the machinery which was erected there some years ago by a company that was started to catch sea lions and melt their fat down to make oil and other products. The company has ceased work, but the machinery remains there, and the old man acts as watchman over it." The remainder of the story is soon told. "We were taken on by the transport to Punta Arenas, and we shipped home on *Oropesia*."

Asked as to how he felt, the young sailor replied that he had a slight touch of malaria, and his toes were giving him trouble, and would require to be operated on again.

Asked as to where he had learned to swim, Mr. Young replied, "In the Dolphin Swimming Club in Croydon. I won these (producing a leather case containing a pair of hair brushes) in a club competition. On the Saturday morning, before the ship broke up, I went on board her and recovered these, as well as some models of ships in bottles."

Our representative then took leave of Mr. Young, who is a modest, unassuming young fellow, making light of the hardships he has undergone, and who glossed over lightly the fact that he had saved the life of one of his fellow apprentices. He is a lad of the right stamp to make a worthy and gallant officer. ***

Another newspaper item!

LOSS OF FAMOUS BARQUE -- Ship on which Notorious Criminal Tried to Escape :

One of the most famous British sailing ships, the four-masted barque *Swanhilda*, owned by W. Lewis and Co., of Glasgow, was reported lost at Lloyd's yesterday, a cable being received from Punta Arenas, in the Straits of Magellan, stating that the ship was ashore at Staten Island, and that she would be a total loss. Fifteen of the crew have been saved, but the Captain, his wife and twelve of the crew, were lost.

The *Swanhilda*, which was one of the fastest clippers afloat, will be remembered as the vessel which unknowingly sheltered the infamous murderer, Butler, whose crimes spread such horror throughout Australia some years ago. When the *Swanhilda* was at Sydney, Butler went on board and engaged himself as an ordinary seaman for the voyage to South America. He ex-

pected when the vessel sailed that he had escaped justice, but, soon after the *Swanhilda* left, the discovery was made that the murderer was on board. Cables were sent with a view to intercepting the vessel before she reached port. A passing steamer, the S.S. *Taupo*, signalled to the *Swanhilda* that one of her crew was the notorious Butler and when the barque reached port Butler was arrested, and subsequently suffered the penalty of his misdeeds.

A Letter from a West Australian, 12/11/1941 :

Dear Mr. W. Young, Sometime ago I believe you were in Mr. Millar's shop discussing ships and the *Swanhilda* was mentioned and you wondered how it was the ship you saw published in the Western Mail got the name *Swanhilda*. Well, I run a troop of Sea Scouts out here in the bush and we are building a training ship, and the boys would have no other name for it but *Swanhilda*, as she was my old ship. I served my apprenticeship in her and was also second and third mate of her. I left her the voyage you signed in her. We left her in Hamburg, and if my old skipper had been going back in her, the mate and I would have been in her when you were. I wonder if the same would have happened if it had been so. Well, I'm glad to have got in touch with someone who has sailed in the dear old ship. She was a real ship and she could sail and stand up to driving. She made two records while I was in her and she has a record of 66 days from Wallaroo to Queenstown which was, I believe, never beaten. I joined her when Lewis bought her off the Nova Scotia firm and while I was in her she was run on Blue Nose Lines "full and plenty and no waste". She was well found and the discipline was strict, very much so, but just. Capt. McDonald was a fine man and a good seaman. After leaving *Swanhilda*, he sailed the *Hougomont* all through the last war. He is dead some time now, but Capt. Gardner, who was mate when I was in her, is over in Sydney. We served our time together in the old *Swanhilda*. I also knew Capt. Pyne's wife.

I have the newspaper cutting of her wreck - only a little piece, and I'd like to see the full act. There wasn't anyone in her with you that had sailed in her before, was there? I hope some day to have the pleasure of a yarn with you about the old ship. Well, cheerio and kind regards to you and yours. Please remember me to Mr. Millar when you next see him. Trusting to hear from you sometime, Yours faithfully,
C.D. Stone, Borden, W.A.

(Does anyone in Australia know anything of Capt. Gardner?)

.....Ed. ***

IRVING M. JOHNSON
123 HOCKANUM ROAD
HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS 01035

December 20, 1979.

3 JAN 1980

Mr. Karl Kortum,
San Francisco Maritime Museum,
Foot of Hyde Street,
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Karl:

Many thanks for thinking of me in connection with the nautical book for the Geographic. I got all fired up, as you are, on the subject and have had several long phone calls with the Geographic people including one of the females that you talked with, Verla Lee Smith. They all either disclaim responsibility for that particular book and project or say that the format is a predetermined factor that cannot be altered.

I know some of the interior workings of that huge organization and, when they get a progression of books going, it is practically impossible to change their approach. The top man involved in that particular type of book is Charles (Chuck) Hyman. He says his hands are also tied once a format is settled on by the higher-ups.

I do wish they would put nautical people on these things. Perhaps they know better what the average reader wants, but not what the nautical reader appreciates. They have a policy over the years of butchering individual writers' text for the magazine, but their success makes it hard to fault.

Hope we get a chance to hash it over a bit in the latter part of February or early March when I will be lecturing in your part of the woods. In the meantime: Fair Winds and a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Irving

December 18, 1979

Dear Irving:

During the year now coming to an end I have had visits from two capable ladies from National Geographic's book department. One, Verla Smith is an expert on copy and the other Anne Kobor, is an expert on illustrations, and in fact had charge of assembling the pictures for Alan Villiers's ship book Men, Ships, and the Sea which the Society brought out in 1962.

I thought that was a dandy book when it came out and I still think so.

I have great respect for Alan Villiers, sailed with him as second mate delivering a replica of a whaling bark from Pedro to Honolulu fifteen years ago, and can say that in addition to being a fine writer about sailing ships he is a thoroughgoing shipmaster and one with a great sense of humor.

We have all lost now that his health prevents him from writing any more.

But returning to the Geographic visits.

I gather that the book division wants to put out another ship book. I also gather that at the present time they lack an organizing idea for this book. And that they are having some trouble with a Harvard professor who is cranking out some of the text about "the early days."

I also gather that they have no idea how many "ship books" of the sort that they seem to be drifting into have come out since the Second World War . . have come out in the seventeen years since their book came out, for that matter.

Well, you can see them on the remainder tables. Scores and scores of nice "ship books" telling the public all about sailing ships systematically appear there. They lavishly illustrate the ships of Vasco da Gama, and exotic vessels like Chinese junks, and the sailing ships that survive today, and the

sail training ships and their annual race, and a voyage in a sailing ship,

I am almost tempted to say ad nauseam, except that they are almost always attractive volumes and there is a slight chance that a museum curator might glean something new out of this one or that one. Lots of color plates. Books published in this country, in England, in Germany, in Scandinavia, usually large in format.

Pointing to this flood, I tried to get the ladies from National Geographic to break away from a worn-out format.

The last thing the country needs in another ship book of this sort. I bow to their defensive reaction to my weary remarks: 'But National Geographic can do it better.'

I don't doubt it.

But I doubt if that will be enough.

What I urged on the Society's representatives was what they plainly lack -- an organizing idea.

The idea is for the Society to discover the last great articulate ship captain still alive in this country (I'm discounting you at the moment, Irving, because you've got some years to go!) and let the book be his view of what he has seen.

I am speaking about Captain Fred Klebingat, now resident in Coos Bay, Oregon.

For starters, he looks back on rounding Cape Horn in 1905, the worst year on record. Thinking of graphics (and one does with such a book), this was the year that the SUSANNA's chronometer failed and the ship left the most zig-zag track that to my knowledge exists on a chart.

Capt. Klebingat: We saw the SUSANNA leaving Port Talbot, towing past, bound for sea. We weren't even half loaded; we said, "She'll be home for Christmas . . ." You always belittle your own ship -- talk up the other fellow; you are always praising "the last ship I was in."

It is "my last ship this" or "my last ship that." (She may be hungry as hell, if truth be told.)

But the SUSANNA was smart looking, port painted, one of Siemer's.

Our ship, the D. H. WATJEN, could make twelve maximum if everything was cracking and the sea smooth.

"She'll be home for Christmas," we said. Then, "Three cheers for the SUSANNA!"

"Three cheers for the D. H. WATJEN!" came floating back to us across the water.

We left long after she did, and we saw her arrive in Caleta Buena -- a long, long time after we arrived.

* * *

Now the foregoing suggests that the organizing idea that I am urging is the sea life of Captain Klebingat. That's another book (and a remarkable one which will be published some day.) No, what I am putting forward is the idea that his comments scattered through a sea book might be a lot more interesting than the comments of a professor who gets it all out of other books or a staff writer for the Society (or worse a committee of staff writers) or a maritime museum curator like myself.

I am not very fond of institutional language.

And when you have a pungent speaker/writer like Klebingat around you don't need it.

I have written down reams of conversations with this man during the past quarter century and the point of all that effort is to preserve the syntax of an authentic seafaring man.

It is hardly a foreign language. In fact it moves to the point with a celerity that I continually admire. The members of the National Geographic Society would have no trouble understanding it.

The captain is an encyclopaedia of the sea that I open by reaching across the desk and picking up the telephone. He has just turned 90, but some remarkable concatenation of genes gives him a memory that leaves me in awe.

I have endless questions:

"How do you tack a square-rigged ship?"

"Where was the salt horse stowed?"

"When did the chip log give way to the patent taffrail log?"

"How did you stow a taff topsail?"

"When did the sailors and when did longshoremen discharge the cargo?"

"Describe paying off a coasting schooner . . ."

The replies are eloquent, and at the same time terse. They are frequently thunderous, making it clear that I should already know the answers.

This is particularly true if I venture even slightly into what we call in the maritime museum profession "yo-ho-ho stuff". Captain Klebingat is -- most of the time -- a determined anti-romantic. He prides himself on the scrupulous accuracy of what he has to relate. At one point he told me: "I have a good memory; I'm not often wrong. Maybe 1% of the time -- Well, sometimes 2% of the time . . ."

Backed up as I am, a museum curator , with Lloyds Registers and other archival paraphernalia, I can attest to the captain's percentages. Recently he added a disclaimer: "Over the years I have come to the conclusion that I wasn't always right. Just because I had seen a certain thing done in a certain way didn't mean that that was the only way to do it . . . so many ships sailed the seas -- thousands of ships -- each a little different.

"You should never be too sure about these things. Sometimes I see something new no matter how much I've seen."

He may prefer literalness, but for all that Captain Klebingat went seafaring with an artist's eye, a novelist's feeling for form . . . and a sailor's unremitting scramble after fair pay in return for service rendered (there is a hard core of the economic in his recollections).

It becomes evident, and it is fortunate that in addition to having an eye, the captain also had an ear:

". . . I once heard the question asked of Captain Smith (of the FALLS OF CLYDE): 'Were you ever married, captain?'

"'Yes, I buried one wife off Cape Flattery, and the other . . . misbehaved.'

That conversation took place on the poop of the FALLS OF CLYDE off Sausalito in 1917.

Klebingat's recollections are full of dialogue from fifty, sixty, seventy years ago. He heard a good phrase and did not forget it. His own spoken language is pithy: I asked him what the captains did during an afternoon visit to Harry Thornton's office on Coleman Dock. Thornton was the shipping master in Seattle who supplied mates and cooks to the schooners in the '20's.

"Find a bootlegger. Get a quart. Sit down. Lick it up. Peddle bull."

And what did Thornton's office look like?

"Just a bare room with an old desk and a few chairs."

Or change the meter:

"Oakland Creek was slowly filling up with sailing ships that steam had driven from the seas."

Or describing action -- Captain Klebingat speculates that the four-masted schooner MELROSE may have been the last vessel to sail from the dock for sea:

"I signed my bills; looked out of the office. Fair wind.

" 'How much to tow me to Skagit Head?' (By the mill tug, a good-sized launch, really.)

" '\$35. '

" 'I can buy a coil of rope for that. '

"All right, I go on board. The ship was pointing north, in the wrong direction. While we were finishing loading, the wind had gone around to the southeast. There is steam up on the donkey. We set sail easy enough. We hang onto the sternline until she turns around and fills on the port tack.

"It started to snow before I was past Skagit Head (the south end of Whidby Island, about four miles away) and the wind headed me. But I could see lights, houses. There was some visibility, in other words. I used my log to double check my position.

"It was not safe to beat through the Narrows in that kind of weather. So we ratched back and forth between Edmonds and Apple Tree Cove during

the night. In the morning I saw Foulweather Bluff through the snow. It is the only anchorage available thereabouts. (In Puget Sound, beating out, you tried to be somewhere where you could anchor when the tide changed.) I anchored under Foulweather Bluff. The boat to Port Townsend came along and threw a paper on board. It was Sunday. Wet decks, snow on deck . .

"As soon as the tide turned I started for the Narrows. When I got abreast of Dungeness the wind failed me -- I drifted forth and back, forth and back . . middle of the channel . . night. One of the Alexander boats -- a passenger liner -- came tearing by; it was dangerous for him if he didn't see a floating lumber pile like us. I always burned a blue light if I thought there was danger of collision. Or you could use a flashlight on the sails if you saw him coming and had plenty of time.

"A gale came up from the northeast with heavy snow. That settled it. Steer course! I went right to sea with that. I had a sounding machine -- World War I surplus -- it had cost me \$75. I dropped that now and then to make sure I was in the middle of the Sound . ."

In recent years the captain has taken to the typewriter (an electric, characteristically) and begun to write up rounded accounts of this and that episode in his sea life.

Those of us who know him are delighted with these, but we also savor the way he speaks.

From a letter:

"I was very lucky that I had a chance to break away from the Cape Horn nitrate trade at such an early time. But to my dying day I will carry those scars on my fingers to remind me of the misery -- always wet and cold -- called out at any time to handle sails and every minute on deck in constant danger of being washed overboard. A lack of fresh water . . I meant to keep yourself clean, so that your hands started to fester. And after all this going on for weeks, you come to a so-called port where not a blade of grass was growing . . to a shanty town of sin, sweat, stink, fleas and venereal disease."

The following is the way he talks. Done from notes. The subject of ballast doesn't often come up these days; yet I don't have to tell you how big a part of sailing ship life it was (There is a thousand tons in the BALCLUTHA right now and I wish I had a little more.):

"Ballast is worthless -- except it costs money to put it aboard."

"It could be clay, it could be sand, it could be rubble, it could be rocks, it could be shingle (like in Callao), it could be slag (from a smelter), in Tahiti it could be boulders (they came from the Fatoua river and we called them "Fatoua yams" . .

"Anything that is useless and has weight."

*Conversation with Capt.
Klebingat, 5/26/76, Americania
Motel, K. K.*

"San Francisco ballast, after the earthquake and fire, was the worst to handle. But good ballast. Everything was mixed in it -- broken bottles, old bricks, anything you could think of. Horse manure and dead cats. And every so often a big chunk of concrete with the reenforcing iron sticking out in all directions. So awkward you couldn't load it in the ballast pan, but had to sling it. But that kind of thing made a good stow -- that ballast from San Francisco didn't shift."

You will recognize the language of a sailor. I say that it should be preserved along with the lore that it concerns itself with. The reference to Tahiti springs out of his joining a Southseaman here exactly seventy years ago.

Klebingat arrived at San Francisco in June, 1909 as donkeyman of the four-masted schooner ANNIE E. SMALE. He was with an almost overly competent captain, "Four Foot Nothing" Colstrup. "He liked leaking ships; there was more money to be made in them." The ANNIE E. SMALE almost sank on the voyage to San Francisco, but Colstrup had the crew quickly whittle some wooden parts for the pump and she made it to the Golden Gate:

" ' Not so loud, boys; don't tell the wife we're sinking. She won't sleep all night. Now there's a piece of hardwood there, just on top of the deckhouse . . . ' "

"We berthed at Pope & Talbot at the foot of Third Street. She was very far gone and needed new spars and numerous repairs. Swayne & Hoyt, the managing owners, did not have money to spare, so we put her on the mud at high tide on Mission Flat. She was there a few months and then they fixed her up for a trip to Australia. One more voyage down there -- She returned with a cargo of coal but hit Point Reyes in a fog and the crew went ashore on the jibboom and notified the life saving station. At the time I was boarding with Algren at the Pioneer Hotel. "

Klebingat had been looking for a berth in an island trading vessel: "I do not know when I first made up my mind to go into the Southsea trade. It may have been in the ANNA on a voyage from Antofagasta to Newcastle, when we passed through the Austral Group and met Southsea schooners, or it may have been through stories about the West India trade from fellows that had served in a Bremen tabacks klipper". As chance would have it he arrived in San Francisco when the only vessel that was in the Southsea trade, the barkentine S. N. CASTLE, was getting ready to load for the Marquesas, Tahiti and Samoa. Fred Klebingat was associated with this old argosy from 1909 when he joined her as donkeyman until 1915 when he left her as chief mate; he came to be known along the City Front as "Fred of the S. N. CASTLE." His captain was the fat, cynical, and profane Captain von Dahlern -- "One Dollar", as he was known in Papeete. The San Francisco marine reporters came down each time the CASTLE put into port to interview the captain . . . "like on T. V. . . going around him just like flies. He was good copy."

I may seem to be reverting to an autobiographical book, but my purpose is just to give some glimpses of this man's sea life. An autobiographical book obviously does not suit the purposes of the National Geographical Society.

Verla Smith and Anne Kobor both talked about using the captain for "some chapters on life at sea" sandwiched in between the rest of the book. (Verla has a number of Klebingat episodes and I gave Anne Kobor an unusual one in which the captain recalls being master of a full-size replica of the VICTORY for the movies. We have specialized a bit in movie ships made out of famous old square-riggers at this museum.)

Apart from being dubious about what "the rest of the book" is going to amount to, I think the idea of "chapters on life at sea" is wasting a resource. What I am suggesting is turning that concept inside out and letting the last eloquent sailing ship captain still alive -- probably the most distinguished representative of his profession on earth -- look at what he saw and learned in the corners and seas of the world.

The idea being that this is a vehicle -- the organizing idea -- to introduce the colored pages that give so much style to the Geographic books.

Photographs to be assembled at various museums throughout the world of artifacts, oil paintings, preserved cabins on shipboard (museum ships) . . . well, I don't have to tell the Geographic their business.

But the comments are Captain Klebingat's, not those of an editorial committee. (I once worked with what I suppose was an editorial committee of the Geographic on a book on Crafts. I kept being phoned and going over

the same thing with different people, and I have a recollection that it still came out wrong.)

Isn't it better to have a description of a capstan by a man who clung to the wreck of the giant American four-masted bark STAR OF POLAND on the coast of Japan (Klebingat was chief mate) rather than a tame description fished out of de Kerchove or Paasch by a staff researcher?

"At first, the ship was still afloat to a certain extent. Less and less as the hull cracked and the water melted the sugar in the cargo. But until that happened, she pounded hard. Like a pile driver, lifting every minute or so and then, wham, down on the rocks -- six thousand tons! It was blowing Force 11, a typhoon, rain so thick you couldn't see.

"The charthouse was made of steel . . . one sea came along and -- whhp -- flattened it. The wheelhouse right aft was made of steel, too, but it had a curve across the back (windows along the front, just like a steamer) and it was made to be a breaker. The wheelhouse was the last thing that stood, long after we had left her. It was there until the last of the hull disappeared some weeks later.

"I wouldn't have believed it -- you saw a sea picking up a capstan attached to a steel deck with six one inch bolts -- breaking it right off. There were six capstans; they went one by one (Nice capstans, I used to use them for sheets and sometimes for the tack.) One the seas could not uproot, but they busted off the forelock on top that held the drum in place; when the drum had been swept off all that was standing was the bent shaft."

Pumps, specifically windmill pumps:

"Shorty Adermann can tell you about windmill pumps. He's been in those old Yankee ships sailing between Bremerhaven and Norway. The "ice klippers", so-called.

"Too much wind . . . they had to reef the sail on the windmill pump. (They reefed it diagonally) . . . Not enough wind, they set stuns on the vanes of the pump. They put a little extension stick on it.

"Light winds . . . the mate put a rope up to the crank. A couple of boys were stationed there ready to give it a pull and get it past dead center.

"Shorty was in the UNION years before Fred Conrad was in her. She was originally the SEMIRAMIS, a full-rigged ship built during the Civil War in Portsmouth, New Hampshire."

*Conversation with Capt. Klebingat,
K.K. 2/10/69*

Sweden for it. The recovered stones, which were actually large boulders, were broken up and fitted piece by piece into the walls of the Canal.

"The stones were grappled with a pair of giant tongs, the steen tongen, about eight feet high with a pole attached. You go where you know the rocks are likely to be found. You anchor the ship fore and aft and create a lee so you can see; a box with a glass bottom is used for sighting. A few drops of oil smooth the water.

"You can see your rock -- the tongs are guided over it with the pole. Heave away with the tackle on the hand winch, bring it to the surface, get it on board.

"At one point Uncle Busch got a contract to clear a channel between the island of Fehmarn and the mainland. The suction dredge couldn't handle the rocks, so he collected them and piled them up on the bottom at a certain place. Then when he got a contract for the rocks he raised them and sold them.

"When the Kiel Canal was finished in 1896, Uncle Busch felt the EMMA was a little small for the coasting trade so he cut her in two and added thirty feet amidships and rigged her as a galeass. This was done in the builders yard in Eckernforde. As such she was quite a handy and fast vessel.

"Now he mostly carried bricks from the shores of Flensburg Bay to Kiel, where there was a great demand for building material as the town was growing fast. I never made a sea voyage in the EMMA but sailed many a time from La-boe to Kiel.

"Uncle Busch used to come in with a load of bricks from Eckernforde, near Flensburg, where there was lots of clay and extensive brick kilns. He hired me, even before I went to sea, to discharge bricks. I forget how much he paid me an hour. As a husky boy on holiday, I earned whatever it was. I was glad to have some pocket money.

"I forget how many thousand bricks the EMMA carried. She was moored broadside to the quay. The bricks were stowed four wide from the bilge up to the deck beams with a space of about three feet empty between tiers. There were about five men passing five bricks at a time from hold to dray, throwing them from hand to hand. The man that picked them out of the tier, the "garbler" or grabber, was the best paid. His fingers wore down more quickly so he got a few phennig more. The bricks were lying flat to flat, one on top of the other. You wore pieces of leather on your hands, the sole of an old shoe with a slit in it so it couldn't slip off. You picked up a stack five high, threw them up to the next fellow, then to the next one, and so on."

What I have included in this lengthy letter is just the tip of the iceberg. Ninety per cent of the material that the Geographic would need to shape a distinctive sea book is in hand. I have made myself the Boswell of this remarkable man for reasons that I am sure are apparent in this letter -- sea lore has been my lifetime interest and I appreciate a chance to get it from the source.

Conversely, I don't like to see the tired old sea cliches rolled around one more time, by National Geographic or anyone else. If the subject is left to staff research or to professors (or, sad to say, to curators ordinarily) that is what happens because such people are circumscribed by books.

There is a unique opportunity to get away from this and let a sea person's light shine on this publication.

Captain Klebingat is raring to go and so am I. He has just had a lens implant for a cataract and feels "it is a good investment for ten years."

He is a personable man whom we have had represent us on a coast to coast television broadcast from the decks of the BALCLUTHA, the poet John Ciardi host.

The senior citizens of this country, whose multitudes are increasing, can take inspiration from the captain's zest and interest in life at the age of 90.

I am willing to put at the disposal of the Geographic my twenty five years of research into this man and his times, provided it is well used. Why? Because it is a grand story and if they want to they can give it a grand package. And say something new on this tired subject.

Our museum is the ^{only} maritime museum in the country that makes a point of seeking out and interviewing veteran seafaring men. (See New York Times story here included.) I have been doing it privately and professionally for forty-five years. And among the hundreds and hundreds of old timers that I have talked to, not one is a twentieth as educating as Capt. Klebingat.

So I think the "\$250,000 on color plates alone" that was cited to me, should be spent on something like Captain Klebingat's Book of the Sea. If the Society wants to send out an imaginative graphic artist and a thoughtful editor, we'll put a book together for 'em!

Who is Captain Klebingat?

Introduce him with an article in the magazine in which he goes back to pay a visit to his old ship, the FALLS OF CLYDE, in Honolulu. A couple of decades ago he spurred me on to a long campaign (four years) that eventually found a home for this vessel with the Bishop Museum out there. The ship is

peopled for many of us with his descriptions of the characters that he found aboard in 1916-17.

See the reprint from Oceans magazine enclosed, particularly his fine description of first sighting the FALLS OF CLYDE on the cover. I am also including a copy of a story, The Three Figureheads, that he has written to induce that museum to change one of the bow carvings, which he feels is wrong.

I will close with a citation from another sailing ship master whom I knew, now dead, John Mathieson. It sums up an area that I have begun to open up with Captain Klebingat, and as usual his comments are penetrating . . . and different. It too, should be an interesting feature for the book -- the sailing ship master as such. It will be old stuff to you, Irving, but not, I think, to the book buying public:

" . . . lord of all he surveyed, his vessel, and all those in her under his immediate command, and the whole open sea before him on which to shape his course. He had to be a little of everything -- sailor, navigator, carpenter, sailmaker, meteorologist, lawyer, and doctor, and able to read the burial service. When in port, he had to contend with all those who made their living from shipping: the ship chandler, the butcher, the stevedore, the dry-dock people, and had to know how to deal with the agent, the consignee, the customs officials, the shipping master, and the port officials. He had to collect the money for the freight, pay all expenses, keep all accounts and send the balance of the freight money to his owners with a statement of accounts."

Season's greetings to you and Exy,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Karl', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Karl Kortum
Chief Curator

National Maritime Museum
San Francisco, Ca., 94109

Included with 27 page letter to Irving
Johnson, 12/21/79

A discussion of French sailing ships, 3
pages.

SUSANNAH's track around Cape Horn, 1905

Dolly Winches, 5 pages

Brief review of PEKING BATTLES CAPE
HORN (Kleb. to K.K. 11/22/77

Plan of ship AMSTEL

Summer, North Atlantic reprint

"The b'y with the t'y / SWANHILDA wreck,
7 pages

New York Times story on S. F. M. M. 5/12/78

Sea Letter, Christmas on an Atoll

Ironbark, Mesquite, and N. Z. Christmas
Trees one page

Seafaring Career of Capt. K. 2 pages

The Three Figureheads, mss.

Wooden Ships & Iron Men--a Misunderstanding
5 pages

Ocean's report
John Wright letter
Mesquite Lodge

also
to
Chip Mason

Irving Johnson letter
Mark Myers booklet

Riggers:

Riggers all over the world are on contract -- get the work out! French riggers are supposed to be good, but I mind in Dunquerque -- I looked at their work. The same as any other:

"That'll do you, Cap?"

"Yes, that'll do." -- and he doesn't look at it very close, doesn't expect much.

I remember the big knives riggers had, about 2" wide and thick at the back. Ground out of a file. Hitting on the back of it with a maul cutting a wire seizing -- next minute cutting a six inch line -- hard usage!

*Conversation with Captain Klebingat,
K.K., 7/13/62*

Cook on the D. H. WATJEN, Cape Horn voyage, 1905:

"We had an excellent cook, as cooks go in German vessels. He was washed out repeatedly -- the ship heels over so quick that he doesn't have time to close the upper door, (The upper lee door of the galley is open so the cook can get some air; the lower half of the door is kept closed and is probably caulked.) Quite a few times I saw the galley fill up to nearly the top of the range.

"The cook on the D. H. WATJEN was a resourceful man. First he would bail out the galley. His fire would be out, but somewhere up under the deckhead he had some kindling in a dry place. He would get his fire going -- he never failed to provide a hot meal.

"Under Cape Horn conditions the tiles that formed the galley floor were too slick to stand on, and so a plank was brought in that ran from side to side and had cleats on it. The galley on the WATJEN, like almost all sailing ship galleys, was a narrow passageway that ran from side to side of the deckhouse. That way there was always a lee door to use in heavy weather.

"This particular cook would dry the men's clothing -- as much of it as he could -- and one of the deck boys (not me) was detailed to keep the galley fire going at night, if that was possible. This was unusual. Cooks did not encourage use of the galley by the crew. Ordinarily it was locked up after

after the day is done. (On a West Coast schooner, the cook's cabin was an extension of the galley; the galley did not run clear through, side to side.) I am sure that on the WATJEN it was arranged between Captain Gerdes and the cook that the galley fire was kept going in order to dry the men's clothes. Gerdes was a captain who was considerate of his crew.

"Although the second mate was supposed to be in charge of stores, our cook was left alone. No one bothered him; he knew how to make use of the provisions to the best advantage. If the ship ran fast, dish out a little more. If the ship ran slow, cut down a little. Nothing was left when we got in port. The cook helped himself to the provisions as he need them.

"The second mate held him in respect: "That man could sweep out the storeroom and make a fine pudding. "

* * *

"Sea stories depict Fo'c's'le Jack lolling about in the Trades and smoking his pipe. But it could be altogether different; life can be very monotonous on a long trip and if there is a trouble-maker aboard things may come to a head. If one wants to find fault, why not take it out on the cook? No matter how good he is . .

"It happened one day on the D. H WATJEN; the gang was going to beat up the cook. It happened that he was making yeast that day and was bottling it. The men at the galley door spelled trouble. Quick as a flash, the cook knocked off the bottom of one of the bottles and with the neck of the bottle in his hand and the jagged edges pointing at his tormentors, he made for them"

"Move you bastards!

"And they moved. And never at any time after that did they come near the cook or speak disrespectfully of him.

Anchors:

I have four detailed pages from the captain on the ancient shipboard ritual of catting and fishing the anchors. Lends itself to good graphics -- the cat block, the fish fall, etc.

Pumpbrake windlass:

"The same kind that Columbus used" -- Klebingat was shipmates with one in the S. N. CASTLE. I have three pages from him on the use of this primitive, but effective device. Lends itself to good graphics.

Cargo handling:

I have particularly grilled the captain on how cargo was taken aboard (a) a square-rigger (b) a schooner and the reverse process, unloading, which called for a different rigging of the Nelson block, burtons, etc. Lends itself to good graphics and there is nothing else like it in print.

"The b'y with the t'y":

(The boy with the toy) -- Captain Smith of the FALLS OF CLYDE's description of the device that Tetzlaff, the carpenter, contrived to make ship's blocks. An exotic in sea lore. Lends itself to good graphics. See account enclosed.

Bread tanks:

"On the WATJEN the biscuit tank was different. It was built for the job -- an iron tank about five feet high and five or five and a half feet wide and at least ten feet long. There was about a foot clearance on top under the deckhead to get into it. The tank ran from side to side in what we called the 'bread room', a stateroom on the port side under the poop.

"The British make the best ship's biscuit (called at different times "bread" or "hard tack" or "sea biscuit" or "pilot bread") and the supply we took aboard at our loading port in Wales was stamped: CROWN MILLS -- CARDIFF.

"The biscuit tank had a manhole in the top with a rubber gasket and two big yokes to hold the manhole cover in place and two big nuts to tighten it up. We removed this and a boy got inside and the biscuit was passed in to him; he stowed it carefully in tiers. After filling the tank he lit a candle just before crawling out. This exhausted the oxygen; bugs can't live without oxygen. There were no weevils in the D. H. WATJEN's hardtack. A bakery smell of fresh baked bread still struck you when you opened the tank a year later. Everytime you opened it to take out a supply of biscuits you did the same thing -- light the candle before bolting the cover back in place.

"This proved that ship owners knew how to keep stores if they wanted to. Penny wise and pound foolish! It doesn't make sense to have insects eating up the stores you've bought to feed the crew."

We have the captain's drawing of this.

Heaving the deepsea lead:

See account in "Summer-North Atlantic" reprint enclosed, marked in red. Lends itself to good graphics.

The jaw rope:

"Most schooners had a fancy jaw rope on the spanker, with man-rope knots on either side . . . cross pointing . . . turk's heads. But only on the after mast -- the main on a two-master, the mizzen on a three-masted vessel, the spanker on a four-master, or the jigger on a five.

"It was the custom-- the other masts might have a piece of old junk, or wire rope, or an iron rod for a jaw rope, but not the aftermost mast. The man-rope knots would be painted up . . the turk's heads a different color.

"It was a point of pride, like the shackles on a sea chest. No matter how poor the schooner, they usually had a fine looking jaw rope.

"The jaw rope was not the most important piece of rigging by a long ways, but it had its purpose. In a calm in particular, when the boom yanks back and forth, the jaw rope prevents it from going too far. The sail will fill -- even with a jaw rope to restrain it the boom gives a hell of a bang once in awhile against the mast. You are sitting in the fo'c's'le -- the whole mast shakes.

"On the first three masts of a West Coast four-masted schooner the booms had a tendency to go aft because the topping lifts led to the next mast aft.

"This wasn't the case on the spanker and it wasn't the case in the big East coast schooners that had double lifts leading forward.

Graining:

"Graining you might say, was a stage of European culture --Billy

Manning told me that in the smart Australian emigrant ships and wool clippers a sailor who could grain was much treasured by the mate. Steel bulwarks, or iron bulwarks and the outside of deck houses made of the same material, were "grained" to imitate wood.

"I have done graining myself. On shore, in my house. I never tried it on a ship. I saw the painters doing it when I was a boy. My mother would have alterations made and then the painter was called in to finish it in graining.

"You prime the surface with white, and then put on a base color. You have an idea in your head what kind of wood you want to imitate and this determines the color. Then you make a mixture of raw sienna, burnt umber, or whatever, mixed with turpentine. Whatever you think should be the tone.

"Then you use your comb -- you make this out of a piece of leather -- you cut the edge with a number of little notches. You have to use a little ingenuity, a little imagination. A rag or sponge also comes into it to run out the comb work in the middle of a panel in imitation of slash grain.

Stencilling:

"Another style in sailing ship days was to ornament the iron and steel panels that made up the bulwarks and deck house with stencilling over white paintwork, a fancy design at the corner of each panel. I have seen this myself. The stencils were cut out by the skipper or mate or a sailor who was clever at that kind of thing. Then you used a pencil brush to frame each panel with a fine line from corner stencil to corner stencil.

"It obviously took a long time to decorate the ship in this fashion; moreover, you have to have fine weather to do it. But set against it there was the old time seaman's mania to scrub and scrub and scrub. The only thing that was cheap was sand and old canvas pads -- you can imagine how long these fancy panels lasted. The elaborate design and stencilling went in no time -- "love's labor lost."

"This kind of decoration and graining were for earlier times; it was not the thing for a short-manned ship in this century. White paint was found to be the most serviceable finish of all.

The amount of information like the foregoing that the captain has at his fingertips is literally endless.

We now turn to his description of ships as he saw them, with national

characteristics. Needless to say, illustrating this kind of thing offers the best opportunities of all to the graphics department -- classic black and whites can be used, paintings can be copied, artifacts and surviving vessels can be photographed in color -- with closeups of details and the captain's comments on these details.

I enclose three pages that I have on hand titled: A discussion of French sailing ships, and the food served in windjammers.

Then here is his description of a Danish sailing ship encountered in New York harbor in 1906.

"But in all my travels, after I left the shores of the Baltic, I have encountered only one sailing vessel that flew the flag of Denmark. While ordinary seaman in the German four-masted bark ANNA, ex British OTTERBURN, we lay together in Brooklyn with a little wooden bark called the EMILIE of Fano. She was chartered to load case oil for South Africa. She was a pretty thing of about 800 tons, constructed of oak, painted white. On Saturdays the crew would be up aloft mopping any shore grime off her yards which were scraped and oiled. Then they went over the side to wash and mop the sleek white hull. The last job before quitting was to shine the brass about the decks -- and she had a lot of it.

'There was only one able seaman in the crew; he stood the second mate's watch and was called the bestman. But all of the rest of the crew must have been handpicked; they were all husky and nearly six feet tall.

"She was so yacht-like that we in the ANNA longed to be in a vessel of that kind where the ropes were so light and the blocks were so small. Compared to the ANNA she was a toy.

Norwegian ships:

"The only well-kept Norwegian ship I ever met was MASHONA. The others were all run on a shoe string -- and what a string. They were old British ships. The Germans bought them first, and then the Norwegians bought them from the Germans and squeezed the last drop out of them as far as use went. Eriksen, the Finn, had that kind of operation, too.

Dolly winches:

I include a few pages on the hand-winches by which sailing ships were discharged in primitive ports.

Also on hand here is the complete mystique of the steam donkey engine, stevedore's donkeys (fast) v. ship's donkeys (slow): "Horses were first used as auxilliary power -- I have seen horses used to hoist out ballast at Newcastle, N. S. W. and to discharge hay bales at the hay wharf in San Francisco from bay scows. Captain Kircheiss had to tend a mule that was used to load the sailing ship when he was anchored at Montevideo. Planks with cleats across were laid on the deck as a path for the mule so that there would be a grip for its hooves.

"The donkey was used as a beast of burden to ease human labor and I think it is not too far fetched to believe that the hoisting engine was named after this animal. In German and Scandinavian countries this piece of machinery is called by its English name, "donkey".

"The Pacific Coast had the most efficient gear of all ships and Murray Bros. built the finest donkeys . . ."

You mentioned the book The Cape Horn Breed. These pages contain some reference to that book and the voyage that it describes in 1905. Klebingat takes out after Capt. Barker, as does Villiers in his The War With Cape Horn. Klebingat was there, in Pisagua, in 1905 when the ship came in. As you can see, he is indignant, still .

Dutch vessels:

"The tjalk, I saw them as a boy -- geraniums in the window sills, a little shutter that slides, aknob on it, curtains . . I've seen them in the Kiel Regatta, the leeboard all brass-bound. I'm talking about when the Kaiser was alive . . ."

(From a conversation)

From a letter:

"In my boyhood days I saw many of this type of Dutch vessel. We called them "tjalks". But in the early 1900s the Dutch were already building most of them out of steel. They were always well-kept and the whole family of the skipper resided on board in the after house which was sunk half into

the deck. A trunk cabin and square window sith steel sliding shutters and flower pots with blooming flowers.

"They looked stumpy with that single stout mast and that nearly square rounded bow and lee boards that were hoisted by winches. I have seen them at sea in the Baltic. Captain William Smith of the FALLS OF CLYDE spoke to me about their seaworthiness. He was in a small bark in the North Sea hove-to in a severe easterly gale. His ship was making heavy weather of it, taking seas over. But close to them was a Dutch tjalk under storm sail. She rode the seas like a duck and aft the skipper's wife was washing clothes, all unconcerned. Some of these vessels with more than one mast, and I believe called "cuffs", made the voyage to the River Plate!"

Dutch ships:

The captain's greatest adventure, which couldn't have a better plot if Joseph Conrad designed it, took place on an old Dutch bark -- he took command of her in Kobe, Japan. The owner intended that the ship be lost, so that he could collect the insurance . . . but it didn't work out that way. Here is the way Klebingat describes the CHIN PU:

"About a month and a half after the wreck of the STAR OF POLAND in 1918 I got my first command, the Chinese bark CHIN PU, ex KAISHIN MARU of Darien, Manchuria, ex BARENDINE OSIRIA of Batavia, ex ship AMSTEL of Amsterdam. She was built in Holland and was composite -- how composite I did not know at the time as the vessel had quite a bit of cargo in her. She was not rigged up . . . we rigged her, my two Caucasian mates and a Japanese crew.

"Some of her construction was apparent. She had a wooden stern, keel, and stern post, also a wooden rudder. Her frames were steel and so was her plating. Up to the waterline she was sheathed with three inches of teak, which was covered with yellow metal. The teak was fastened with lead pipes going through the steel and teak. These were filled with wooden trunnels.

"Her bilges were strengthened with chicken wire and 4 inches of concrete; this I found out later on. She had two tiers of beams; the upper tween deck had steel beams with teak planking. The lower tier of beams were wood. Her lower masts and lower yards and lower topsail yards were steel. Her bowsprit was teak and so was her spanker boom and gaff.

"To tell you the truth she was the homeliest vessel I ever served in. And the slowest. But when I found myself going ashore on the

Ballintang Islands, she showed what she could do, clawing off a lee shore. She again proved it outside Keelung when caught on the north coast of Formosa in a northeast gale. I was trying to get into Keelung in distress. She sailed along on the edge of the breakers, but every mile she made were good miles and after an hour I was sure the ship was safe.

"It was a moonlight night, and a steamer reported a bark going ashore or ashore on Formosa and the owners of the CHIN PU were rubbing their hands (she was insured for a quarter of a million dollars). But what a let-down when they heard from me at Nagasaki. I will tell all of this in a tale I will call CHIN PU. It means 'Go Ahead' "

We have discovered the builder's plans of the CHIN PU in Holland -- they make good graphics. An interesting vessel. These plans might encourage some model builders, at least, to cease duplicating the endlessly overdone CUTTY SARK.

From the decks of the CHIN PU we get a glimpse of a Chinese junk in action:

"After leaving Keelung astern, we found ourselves on the fly-way of migratory birds. To myriads of swallows, winging their way to Japan, the CHIN PU must have been a welcome sight after a tiring day as we would give them a much needed night's rest. They invaded the ship. They were everywhere, in the fo'c's'le, in the galley, on yards and stays, wherever they could hang on. In my room they were found by the dozens -- on curtain rods and lamps and picture frames. The birds were a blue-black, metallic color with a brown spot on the throat. Well rested, they would sail at dawn. But if there was bad weather ahead, the swallows would return before noon.

"And here is an episode I may not have told you about. I had to admire the seamanship of one of these Chinese fishermen -- it happened when about west of Okinawa. We were beating against a fairly fresh northerly wind, standing west on the starboard tack. A Chinese junk was standing also west, and at regular intervals was dropping a sampan, with its fisherman, for a day's line fishing.

"But it started to breeze up and the wind backed to the northwest. We went about. By noon it was blowing a light gale and we caught up again with the Chinese fishing junk. He had become alarmed about the safety

of his men. Carrying all the sail she could carry, the junk rushed towards the sampan nearest him, rounded to, in came boat and fisherman, the sails filled again, and, spray flying, heeling over at a crazy angle, he made for the next sampan about a mile away. He repeated this performance and in an hour's time had recovered all his fishing craft. He then hove to. We were already shortened down to lower topsails and foresail. The last we saw of the junk, which had shortened down to reefed lowers, she was riding it out just like a duck."

British ships:

Captain Klebingat had a link with the glory days of the British sailing ship -- a time when the wool clippers foregathered at Circular Quay in Sydney and even an occasional tea clipper was to be found there. The link was his second mate, Billy Manning, a prototypical old sea dog whose experiences reached back into another era altogether:

"The BRILLIANT was lying alongside CUTTY SARK at Circular Quay one time and Bill noticed this strange looking weathervane at her main truck. He asked an able seaman on the CUTTY SARK what it was.

"'That's a cutty sark.'

"'What's that?'

"'A chemise . . a shirt,' was the answer.

"It was mounted as if the chemise was spread out and lashed to a stick and trailing in the wind, the way he described it to me.

"My own stay in Australia was all too short to know much about those famous old wool clippers of his, although I had a good chance to look at the Craig barks engaged in the inter-colonial trade. But let me quote C. Fox Smith:

"'But, Lord! the names them good ships had --
Enough to drive a plain man mad!
The way them names was spelled or said
'Ud crack your jaw like Liverpool bread;
There was 'Parthen-o-pe' and 'Thucydides,'
And a whole lot more and worse besides,
And 'Melpomene' and 'Euprho-syne'
Was the sort o' names in the Blue Star Line.'

"We'll take one of these names, MELPOMENE. Bill would pronounce it MEL-PO-MEE-NEE. And ANTIOPE he called AN-TI -O-PEE. And not as some called her, ANTI-HOPE. "Sunny Brook" Hans, a San Francisco sailor I knew, had sailed in his younger years in the PERICLES when she had become Norwegian. Bill pronounced it PERICK-LEASE.

"Old Bill, as he was known to the MELROSE crew, was an authority on those ships but he knew about other things, too. I had ample opportunity to listen to Billy on long nights when standing behind the weather cloth, the MELROSE headreaching in a southeast gale under reefed main, mizzen, and full foresail. Here we were dry, smoking our pipes; the rain didn't reach us. In front we were sheltered by the deckload that reached about four feet above the poop. There was no need for "soul and body lashings", Cape Horn style. There was no finer and drier sailing vessel than a loaded West Coast lumber schooner that was tight. Even if she wasn't, we had power driven pumps. It was a good feeling to be captain of one.

"Behind that weathercloth spread in the spanker rigging may have struck Bill as the right setting, somehow, to tell me a story from his youth -- how he became a jailbird and inmate of Dartmoor Prison. In London one time he broke up a whore shop. His brother was in the Metropolitan Police department. His brother ran him in. Bill showed fight and the bobbies felt obliged to beat him up. His brother came around afterward; Bill was behind bars:

" 'I'm sorry. '

" 'You couldn't be any more sorry than I am. '

"They gave him six months in Dartmoor prison. Here they dealt out punishment. It was not working at some job like giving a stone mason a hand in building a new wing. No, here they also had the treadmill. On the treadmill you had to keep moving because that wheel was moving. Occasionally they spelled you by putting you on the crank. If you didn't keep a strain on the crank a ratchet would slip and give you away to the jailors, or "screws" as Bill called them.

"One of the jailors had a dog and one day he threw him a raw mutton chop. Bill was hungry -- somehow he beat the dog to the chop, cleaned the dirt off . . .

"At other times, it may have been on moonlight nights in the trades that I may keep him company. He may quote from the works of Dickens, and Sir Walter Scott and Wilkie Collins.¹ He may tell me about London and take me down Leadenhall Street, and to the Minories and tell me exactly where Dickens saw Captain Cuttle's "wooden midshipman." And he may tell me

about Nicholas Nickleby, and Squeers, that tutor of youth, and his "Do-the-Boys Hall" (Dotheboys Hall). He could quote the Bible, Shakespeare; he knew Jules Verne, too. But the Bible was the best.

"'Work while there is day, that it cometh the night when no one can work.'" That was Billy Manning . . and he said, "Yes, we've got to work like hell."

"And another time we may have been nearing some island landfall on a tropical night and he may tell me about Calcutta and Bombay in the old jute trade. We came to talk about Kipling and the "Road to Mandalay -- 'elephants a piling teak, in the sludgy squidgy creek, where the silence 'ung that 'eavy, you were 'arf afraid to speak.'

"Yes, he had watched them doing that and I asked what had struck him most:

"'It was that silence that 'ung so 'eavy.'

"Bill had served in the transports JUMNA and CROCODILE. Kipling speaks of troops going out in the CROCODILE.

"'How was it he knew, that the JUMNA was due . . 'Kipling writes in Barrack Room Ballads.'"

* * *

Jack London in his book The Sea Wolf created a fictitious sea captain named Wolf Larson who has a library on shipboard -- and plays the part. During his six years as master of the last Southsea schooner regularly trading out of San Francisco, the four-masted MELROSE (1919 through 1925), Captain Klebingat began assembling a notable library about that part of the world, regularly buying from London rare book dealers. He continued adding to this for another fifteen years when he mastered schooner yachts for various wealthy people on extended cruises throughout the Pacific islands.

Ever since I have known him he has reached out beyond his own experience. He is a scholar and maintains a world-wide correspondence of awesome proportions.

Alan Villiers burst on the scene with his splendid square-rigger stuff in the early 1930s. As time went on he often came to sing the praises of "the greatest ship of all", the only five-masted full-rigged ship ever built, the PREUSSEN. But Alan is in many ways a late-comer; here is Captain

Klebingat's description of the Finnish ships that were about all that were keeping the seas in Villier's day.

"Erikson -- he was a hell of a businessman; he was squeezing the last bit of juice out of the turnip. When the last bit of old junk -- old rope -- was worn out, he sold them for scrap.

"From the businessman's standpoint that was correct -- as long as they made money, keep them: when they stopped making money, get rid of them."

The simple truth is that Klebingat's extra decades of sea experience took him back into a nobler period. Villiers never saw "the greatest ship in the world"; he wasn't old enough. (Either were you, either was I). Here is Captain Klebingat's description of her arriving in port.

"It was about November of 1905. I was deckboy on the German three-masted full-rigged ship D. H. WATJEN, lying at Iquiqui, the most important nitrate port in Chile. We had discharged our cargo of briquets, which we had loaded at Port Talbot, Wales. Part went ashore in Pisagua (another nitrate port) and the rest at Iquiqui. We were now loading nitrate in sacks. There were at least eighty sailing ships anchored in this extensive open roadstead. They were moored in four tiers, bows to the westward, both anchors down, a mooring out astern to keep them in position. The bows decorated with figureheads in those days with few exceptions -- would rise with the incoming westerly swell and then recede as the long swell passed.

"Cargo was handled by lighters called launches and their crew, the launcheros. There were some days in this exposed anchorage when the swell was too high and no cargo could be handled. We called these "surf days."

"I was one of the horsepower that hove up nitrate out of the launcha, one sack at a time.

"One fine afternoon we had just emptied a lighter and had a chance for a blow. A sail appeared in the west. The launcheros saw it too and they soon had an idea what ship it was. They rested on their oars and throughout the anchorage excitedly cried:

"Pot-to-see-see! Pot-to-see-see!"

But it was not the POTOSI; as she came nearer we saw that this was the other German five-master, the PREUSSEN. Very likely the launcheros could not pronounce PREUSSEN -- all five masters were POT-TO-SEE-SEES to them. Never mind if the rig was bark or ship. But they went crazy. A lot of money was to be made.

"The PREUSSEN coming into the roadstead was one of the most beautiful sights I ever saw. There was no time lost: the sails were being furled, the cargo gear was going aloft, and ballast was being shovelled -- "Schwoosh, schwoosh" -- out of the side ports. (Captain Lange, who sailed with Captain Boye Peterson in PREUSSEN, told me that they started to shovel out ballast several days from port, when they closed with the coast. They shouldn't have, but they did.)

"The little tug CRAVANCHA picked PREUSSEN up and I was surprised at the speed she made towed by so small a craft. As the great five-master came by I noted how immaculate her hull was; there was no sign that she had been at least sixty days at sea. Black topsides, white tallow paint boot topping, red bottom. I noted her elaborate bow ornament, the scrollhead with long trailboards on either side, ^{all} done out in gold leaf. A gold leafed carving decorated the stern. I was seeing some flash packet!

"PREUSSEN dropped both anchors in the tier right astern of us, off our port quarter. The tug brought out her stern mooring; they set this tight and it was less than an hour later that there were three or four lighters on either side of her working all hatches.

"It was about the fourth day after the PREUSSEN arrived that a boat from her approached our ship. I do not know what her errand was, but soon one of her officers was climbing our gangway ladder. At the moment we were taking it easy and so was the hatch tender, our second mate, whom we addressed as "stuerman". Stuerman was, except for his cap, indistinguishable from the rest of us in our worn and sweaty clothing.

"The second mate from the PREUSSEN stepped over the rail and introduced himself:

"My name is so-and-so, second officer of the five-masted full-rigged ship PREUSSEN."

Our second mate replied, "My name is Herr Hanks, second officer of the three-masted full-rigged ship D. H. WATJEN."

"This reply seemed to stun our visitor from the PREUSSEN. He did not expect this kind of reply from the mate of a Bremen owned ship. (The PREUSSEN was from Hamburg). He apparently did not think that our second mate had the right to call himself "Herr". . .

"But he did not have much time to reflect on this, because a shrill whistle from the PREUSSEN sent him hurrying back into his boat.

"Eight days after her arrival the big ship was loaded -- 8800 tons

tons of nitrate in her holds and ready to leave. As the last sack was coming aboard the windlass was turning over, the anchor was coming up, the towboat was ahead. The little CRAVANCHA had already picked up the stern mooring and had delivered anchor and chain alongside. A whistle was heard on the PREUSSEN's decks and all staysails rose on their stays. The sheets were set taut. Another whistle -- all five lower topsails dropped and were sheeted home as the PREUSSEN came past us.

"A fine breeze was blowing and soon everything was set on all five masts. The tug let go after she was clear of the shipping. In another hour she was out of sight.

"Some despatch -- in and out in eight days. An old limejuicer might be there two months discharging and loading.

"The PREUSSEN was full of innovations, but still traditional in appearance. For instance, she steered by steam when off Cape Horn. And she had a balanced rudder, a rare thing in sailing ships. Her topmasts and lower masts were in one piece -- not a single piece, but with sections of plate rivetted together and with butt straps."

The famous captain of the POT--TO--SEE--SEE, Roberto Miethe, whom Villiers went to interview in Valparaiso in later years and wrote up beautifully in The War With Cape Horn, got his start at sea in the galeass EMMA, owned by Klebingat's uncle Heinrich Busch. The trade was "steen fisching" or stone fishing.

Klebingat also got his first wages in the EMMA:

"My uncle Heinrich Busch owned a little vessel called the EMMA, named for my aunt, and he was living in a place called Laboe on the south side of the entrance to Kiel Bay. Captain Miethe made his first voyage to sea with Uncle Heinrich and what they were doing was "steen fisching", which was collecting granite boulders from the bottom of the Baltic to be used in lining the banks of the Kiel Canal. You see, there are no granite or other rock outcroppings in northern Germany, and what boulders are found buried in the soil came from glaciers in Scandinavia in the Ice Age. Some were deposited on the bottom of the Baltic, but these were not so plentiful either. Especially since there were a good many vessels that were in the business of recovering them. There were places where it was not permitted to pick up these stones, but that is where Uncle Busch went most -- usually under the cover of night. So Captain Miethe told me.

"If granite was not recovered in this way, it was necessary to go to



Capt. Roberto Miethe in Valparaíso, 1966.

K.K. photograph

BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM

4 JAN 1980

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10 IRVING M. JOHNSON

26 December 79

Dear Skipper and Exy,

It always is a treat to have your Christmas Greetings and to learn of the most recent travels and exploits of you both, usually with a surprise! Yes, I regret much that it happened I was away when you were here. Altho my travels in the past three years cannot match yours, I have been away about as much as I've been home. My yard and house bear obvious testimony to that.

During the summer, for The Asia Foundation, I was able to visit (after American Samoa for a different purpose), Western Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Solomms and Papua New Guinea. I had never been to Tonga (we should have gone!) and had not been back to W. Samoa since our trip. I had been several times to Fiji and PNG. In regard to W. Samoa and the Solomons, friends said, well, you won't recognize them, many changes, etc. I think what impressed me the most was the extent to which an essentially traditional life-style still is lived by the bulk of the population in both places. I know you can easily imagine and share many of my other reactions, including nostalgia, sadness and a sense of what I have to call humility. I expect to return to most, if not all of these places again, next year.

Glad you saw, first, our exhibit at Bishop Museum, as you never will again see those documented objects together in one place. The current exhibit at the National Gallery was put together on an entirely different basis, as works of art. It is being so well received that it has been extended into February.

A short time ago I was in San Francisco, and in talking with Karl Kortum, he told me of his efforts on behalf of one of our most respected and talented friends, Capt. Fred K. Klebingat. Fred is one of those rare original people, in his case a product of the sea and ships. Few remain from his most important decades. He recently celebrated his 90th birthday and still is going strong. Among his considerable abilities, he writes, and writes well. Enclosed is an example, which we published. These are true stories and, not unimportant, required only light editing. Fred is an endless source of information and documentation for maritime historians world-wide. If we had them, he would be among our Living National Treasures.

Karl has been working with people at the National Geographic about the possibility of them publishing some of his stories. In our discussions, we saw suddenly the unique experience of the Geographic covering him returning to his old ship, the FALLS OF CLYDE, this year celebrating her centennial ~~year~~, and Fred not far behind. As you saw when here, the jigger remains to be rigged and and there are infinite details for which we need his expertise, in his role as Chief Technical Advisor. It would make a marvelous story and could be done in that splendid style of the Geographic. Could I ask you to suggest and support this idea with Gilbert Grosvenor? There is not much time in the future to do it, and I believe it has solid merit. I would appreciate your reaction and ideas, as well as suggestions...soon, if possible. Call collect to Karl or me.

Meanwhile, with every best wish to you both for the New Year and warmest wishes from Hawaii,

Aloha,

cc:K. Kortum

the deck. A trunk cabin and square window with steel sliding shutters and flower pots with blooming flowers.

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The captain's greatest adventure, which couldn't have a better plot if Joseph Conrad designed it, took place on an old Dutch bark -- he took command of her in Kobe, Japan. The owner intended that the ship be lost, so that he could collect the insurance . . . but it didn't work out that way. Here is the way Klebingat describes the CHIN PU:

"About a month and a half after the wreck of the STAR OF POLAND in 1918 I got my first command, the Chinese bark CHIN PU, ex KAISHIN MARU of Darien, Manchuria, ex BARENDINE OSIRIA of Batavia, ex ship AMSTEL of Amsterdam. She was built in Holland and was composite -- how composite I did not know at the time as the vessel had quite a bit of cargo in her. She was not rigged up . . . we rigged her, my two Caucasian mates and a Japanese crew.

"Some of her construction was apparent. She had a wooden stern, keel, and stern post, also a wooden rudder. Her frames were steel and so was her plating. Up to the waterline she was sheathed with three inches of teak, which was covered with yellow metal. The teak was fastened with lead pipes going through the steel and teak. These were filled with wooden trunnels.

"Her bilges were strengthened with chicken wire and 4 inches of concrete; this I found out later on. She had two tiers of beams; the upper tween deck had steel beams with teak planking. The lower tier of beams were wood. Her lower masts and lower yards and lower topsail yards were steel. Her bowsprit was teak and so was her spanker boom and gaff.

"To tell you the truth she was the homeliest vessel I ever served in. And the slowest. But when I found myself going ashore on the

Ballintang Islands, she showed what she could do, clawing off a lee shore. She again proved it outside Keelung when caught on the north coast of Formosa in a northeast gale. I was trying to get into Keelung in distress. She sailed along on the edge of the breakers, but every mile she made were good miles and after an hour I was sure the ship was safe.

"It was a moonlight night, and a steamer reported a bark going ashore or ashore on Formosa and the owners of the CHIN PU were rubbing their hands (she was insured for a quarter of a million dollars). But what a let-down when they heard from me at Nagasaki. I will tell all of this in a tale I will call CHIN PU. It means 'Go Ahead' "

We have discovered the builder's plans of the CHIN PU in Holland -- they make good graphics. An interesting vessel. These plans might encourage some model builders, at least, to cease duplicating the endlessly overdone CUTTY SARK.

From the decks of the CHIN PU we get a glimpse of a Chinese junk in action:

"After leaving Keelung astern, we found ourselves on the fly-way of migratory birds. To myriads of swallows, winging their way to Japan, the CHIN PU must have been a welcome sight after a tiring day as we would give them a much needed night's rest. They invaded the ship. They were everywhere, in the fo'c's'le, in the galley, on yards and stays, wherever they could hang on. In my room they were found by the dozens -- on curtain rods and lamps and picture frames. The birds were a blue-black, metallic color with a brown spot on the throat. Well rested, they would sail at dawn. But if there was bad weather ahead, the swallows would return before noon.

"And here is an episode I may not have told you about. I had to admire the seamanship of one of these Chinese fishermen -- it happened when about west of Okinawa. We were beating against a fairly fresh northerly wind, standing west on the starboard tack. A Chinese junk was standing also west, and at regular intervals was dropping a sampan, with its fisherman, for a day's line fishing.

"But it started to breeze up and the wind backed to the northwest. We went about. By noon it was blowing a light gale and we caught up again with the Chinese fishing junk. He had become alarmed about the safety

of his men. Carrying all the sail she could carry, the junk rushed towards the sampan nearest him, rounded to, in came boat and fisherman, the sails filled again, and, spray flying, heeling over at a crazy angle, he made for the next sampan about a mile away. He repeated this performance and in an hour's time had recovered all his fishing craft. He then hove to. We were already shortened down to lower topsails and foresail. The last we saw of the junk, which had shortened down to reefed lowers, she was riding it out just like a duck."

British ships:

Captain Klebingat had a link with the glory days of the British sailing ship -- a time when the wool clippers foregathered at Circular Quay in Sydney and even an occasional tea clipper was to be found there. The link was his second mate, Billy Manning, a prototypical old sea dog whose experiences reached back into another era altogether:

"The BRILLIANT was lying alongside CUTTY SARK at Circular Quay one time and Bill noticed this strange looking weathervane at her main truck. He asked an able seaman on the CUTTY SARK what it was.

"'That's a cutty sark.'

"'What's that?'

"'A chemise . . . a shirt,' was the answer.

"It was mounted as if the chemise was spread out and lashed to a stick and trailing in the wind, the way he described it to me.

"My own stay in Australia was all too short to know much about those famous old wool clippers of his, although I had a good chance to look at the Craig barks engaged in the inter-colonial trade. But let me quote C. Fox Smith:

"'But, Lord! the names them good ships had --
Enough to drive a plain man mad!
The way them names was spelled or said
'Ud crack your jaw like Liverpool bread;
There was 'Parthen-ope' and 'Thucydides,'
And a whole lot more and worse besides,
And 'Melpomene' and 'Euprho-syne'
Was the sort o' names in the Blue Star Line.'

"We'll take one of these names, MELPOMENE. Bill would pronounce it MEL-PO-MEE-NEE. And ANTIOPE he called AN-TI -O-PEE. And not as some called her, ANTI-HOPE. "Sunny Brook" Hans, a San Francisco sailor I knew, had sailed in his younger years in the PERICLES when she had become Norwegian. Bill pronounced it PERICK-LEASE.

"Old Bill, as he was known to the MELROSE crew, was an authority on those shifts but he knew about other things, too. I had ample opportunity to listen to Billy on long nights when standing behind the weather cloth, the MELROSE headreaching in a southeast gale under reefed main, mizzen, and full foresail. Here we were dry, smoking our pipes; the rain didn't reach us. In front we were sheltered by the deckload that reached about four feet above the poop. There was no need for "soul and body lashings", Cape Horn style. There was no finer and drier sailing vessel than a loaded West Coast lumber schooner that was tight. Even if she wasn't, we had power driven pumps. It was a good feeling to be captain of one.

"Behind that weathercloth spread in the spanker rigging may have struck Bill as the right setting, somehow, to tell me a story from his youth -- how he became a jailbird and inmate of Dartmoor Prison. In London one time he broke up a whore shop. His brother was in the Metropolitan Police department. His brother ran him in. Bill showed fight and the bobbies felt obliged to beat him up. His brother came around afterward; Bill was behind bars:

" 'I'm sorry. '

" 'You couldn't be any more sorry than I am. '

"They gave him six months in Dartmoor prison. Here they dealt out punishment. It was not working at some job like giving a stone mason a hand in building a new wing. No, here they also had the treadmill. On the treadmill you had to keep moving because that wheel was moving. Occasionally they spelled you by putting you on the crank. If you didn't keep a strain on the crank a ratchet would slip and give you away to the jailors, or "screws" as Bill called them.

"One of the jailors had a dog and one day he threw him a raw mutton chop. Bill was hungry -- somehow he beat the dog to the chop, cleaned the dirt off . . .

"At other times, it may have been on moonlight nights in the trades that I may keep him company. He may quote from the works of Dickens, and Sir Walter Scott and Wilkie Collins.¹ He may tell me about London and take me down Leadenhall Street, and to the Minories and tell me exactly where Dickens saw Captain Cuttle's "wooden midshipman." And he may tell me

about Nicholas Nickleby, and Squeers, that tutor of youth, and his "Do-the-Boys Hall"(Dotheboys Hall). He could quote the Bible, Shakespeare; he knew Jules Verne, too. But the Bible was the best.

"'Work while there is day, that it cometh the night when no one can work.'" That was Billy Manning . . and he said, "Yes, we've got to work like hell."

"And another time we may have been nearing some island landfall on a tropical night and he may tell me about Calcutta and Bombay in the old jute trade. We came to talk about Kipling and the "Road to Mandalay -- 'elephants a piling teak, in the sludgy squidgy creek, where the silence 'ung that 'eavy, you were 'arf afraid to speak.'

"Yes, he had watched them doing that and I asked what had struck him most:

"'It was that silence that 'ung so 'eavy.'

"Bill had served in the transports JUMNA and CROCODILE. Kipling speaks of troops going out in the CROCODILE.

"'How was it he knew, that the JUMNA was due . . 'Kipling writes in Barrack Room Ballads.'" * * *

Jack London in his book The Sea Wolf created a fictitious sea captain named Wolf Larson who has a library on shipboard -- and plays the part. During his six years as master of the last Southsea schooner regularly trading out of San Francisco, the four-masted MELROSE (1919 through 1925), Captain Klebingat began assembling a notable library about that part of the world, regularly buying from London rare book dealers. He continued adding to this for another fifteen years when he mastered schooner yachts for various wealthy people on extended cruises throughout the Pacific islands.

Ever since I have known him he has reached out beyond his own experience. He is a scholar and maintains a world-wide correspondence of awesome proportions.

Alan Villiers brst on the scene with his splendid square-rigger stuff in the early 1930s. As time went on he often came to sing the praises of "the greatest ship of all", the only five-masted full-rigged ship ever built, the PREUSSEN. But Alan is in many ways a late-comer; here is Captain

Klebingat's description of the Finnish ships that were about all that were keeping the seas in Villier's day.

"Erikson -- he was a hell of a businessman; he was squeezing the last bit of juice out of the turnip. When the last bit of old junk -- old rope -- was worn out, he sold them for scrap.

"From the businessman's standpoint that was correct -- as long as they made money, keep them: when they stopped making money, get rid of them."

The simple truth is that Klebingat's extra decades of sea experience took him back into a nobler period. Villiers never saw "the greatest ship in the world"; he wasn't old enough. (Either were you, either was I). Here is Captain Klebingat's description of her arriving in port.

"It was about November of 1905. I was deckboy on the German three-masted full-rigged ship D. H. WATJEN, lying at Iquiqui, the most important nitrate port in Chile. We had discharged our cargo of briquets, which we had loaded at Port Talbot, Wales. Part went ashore in Pisagua (another nitrate port) and the rest at Iquiqui. We were now loading nitrate in sacks. There were at least eighty sailing ships anchored in this extensive open roadstead. They were moored in four tiers, bows to the westward, both anchors down, a mooring out astern to keep them in position. The bows decorated with figureheads in those days with few exceptions -- would rise with the incoming westerly swell and then recede as the long swell passed.

"Cargo was handled by lighters called launches and their crew, the launcheros. There were some days in this exposed anchorage when the swell was too high and no cargo could be handled. We called these "surf days."

"I was one of the horsepower that hove up nitrate out of the launcha, one sack at a time.

"One fine afternoon we had just emptied a lighter and had a chance for a blow. A sail appeared in the west. The launcheros saw it too and they soon had an idea what ship it was. They rested on their oars and throughout the anchorage excitedly cried:

"Pot-to-see-see! Pot-to-see-see!"

But it was not the POTOSI; as she came nearer we saw that this was the other German five-master, the PREUSSEN. Very likely the launcheros could not pronounce PREUSSEN -- all five masters were POT-TO-SEE-SEES to them. Never mind if the rig was bark or ship. But they went crazy. A lot of money was to be made.

"The PREUSSEN coming into the roadstead was one of the most beautiful sights I ever saw. There was no time lost: the sails were being furled, the cargo gear was going aloft, and ballast was being shovelled -- "Schwoosh, schwoosh" -- out of the side ports. (Captain Lange, who sailed with Captain Boye Peterson in PREUSSEN, told me that they started to shovel out ballast several days from port, when they closed with the coast. They shouldn't have, but they did.)

"The little tug CRAVANCHA picked PREUSSEN up and I was surprised at the speed she made towed by so small a craft. As the great five-master came by I noted how immaculate her hull was; there was no sign that she had been at least sixty days at sea. Black topsides, white tallow paint boot topping, red bottom. I noted her elaborate bow ornament, the scrollhead with long trailboards on either side ^{all} done out in gold leaf. A gold leafed carving decorated the stern. I was seeing some flash packet!

"PREUSSEN dropped both anchors in the tier right astern of us, off our port quarter. The tug brought out her stern mooring; they set this tight and it was less than an hour later that there were three or four lighters on either side of her working all hatches.

"It was about the fourth day after the PREUSSEN arrived that a boat from her approached our ship. I do not know what her errand was, but soon one of her officers was climbing our gangway ladder. At the moment we were taking it easy and so was the hatch tender, our second mate, whom we addressed as "stuerman". Stuerman was, except for his cap, indistinguishable from the rest of us in our worn and sweaty clothing.

"The second mate from the PREUSSEN stepped over the rail and introduced himself:

"My name is so-and-so, second officer of the five-masted full-rigged ship PREUSSEN."

Our second mate replied, "My name is Herr Hanks, second officer of the three-masted full-rigged ship D. H. WATJEN."

"This reply seemed to stun our visitor from the PREUSSEN. He did not expect this kind of reply from the mate of a Bremen owned ship. (The PREUSSEN was from Hamburg). He apparently did not think that our second mate had the right to call himself "Herr". . .

"But he did not have much time to reflect on this, because a shrill whistle from the PREUSSEN sent him hurrying back into his boat.

"Eight days after her arrival the big ship was loaded -- 8800 tons

tons of nitrate in her holds and ready to leave. As the last sack was coming aboard the windlass was turning over, the anchor was coming up, the towboat was ahead. The little CRAVANCHA had already picked up the stern mooring and had delivered anchor and chain alongside. A whistle was heard on the PREUSSEN's decks and all staysails rose on their stays. The sheets were set taut. Another whistle -- all five lower topsails dropped and were sheeted home as the PREUSSEN came past us.

"A fine breeze was blowing and soon everything was set on all five masts. The tug let go after she was clear of the shipping. In another hour she was out of sight.

"Some despatch -- in and out in eight days. An old limejuicer might be there two months discharging and loading.

"The PREUSSEN was full of innovations, but still traditional in appearance. For instance, she steered by steam when off Cape Horn. And she had a balanced rudder, a rare thing in sailing ships. Her topmasts and lower masts were in one piece -- not a single piece, but with sections of plate rivetted together and with butt straps."

The famous captain of the POT--TO--SEE--SEE, Roberto Miethe, whom Villiers went to interview in Valparaiso in later years and wrote up beautifully in The War With Cape Horn, got his start at sea in the galeass EMMA, owned by Klebingat's uncle Heinrich Busch. The trade was "steen fisching" or stone fishing.

Klebingat also got his first wages in the EMMA:

"My uncle Heinrich Busch owned a little vessel called the EMMA, named for my aunt, and he was living in a place called Laboe on the south side of the entrance to Kiel Bay. Captain Miethe made his first voyage to sea with Uncle Heinrich and what they were doing was "steen fisching", which was collecting granite boulders from the bottom of the Baltic to be used in lining the banks of the Kiel Canal. You see, there are no granite or other rock outcroppings in northern Germany, and what boulders are found buried in the soil came from glaciers in Scandinavia in the Ice Age. Some were deposited on the bottom of the Baltic, but these were not so plentiful either. Especially since there were a good many vessels that were in the business of recovering them. There were places where it was not permitted to pick up these stones, but that is where Uncle Busch went most -- usually under the cover of night. So Captain Miethe told me.

"If granite was not recovered in this way, it was necessary to go to



Capt. Roberto Niethe in Valparaíso, 1966.

K.K. photograph

BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM

4 JAN 1980

P. O. Box 6037, Honolulu, Hawaii 96818 • Telephone 847-3511

(10 IRVING M. JOHNSON)

26 December 79

Dear Skipper and Exy,

It always is a treat to have your Christmas Greetings and to learn of the most recent travels and exploits of you both, usually with a surprise! Yes, I regret much that it happened I was away when you were here. Altho my travels in the past three years cannot match yours, I have been away about as much as I've been home. My yard and house bear obvious testimony to that.

During the summer, for The Asia Foundation, I was able to visit (after American Samoa for a different purpose), Western Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Solomons and Papua New Guinea. I had never been to Tonga (we should have gone!) and had not been back to W. Samoa since our trip. I had been several times to Fiji and PNG. In regard to W. Samoa and the Solomons, friends said, well, you won't recognize them, many changes, etc. I think what impressed me the most was the extent to which an essentially traditional life-style still is lived by the bulk of the population in both places. I know you can easily imagine and share many of my other reactions, including nostalgia, sadness and a sense of what I have to call humility. I expect to return to most, if not all of these places again, next year.

Glad you saw, first, our exhibit at Bishop Museum, as you never will again see those documented objects together in one place. The current exhibit at the National Gallery was put together on an entirely different basis, as works of art. It is being so well received that it has been extended into February.

A short time ago I was in San Francisco, and in talking with Karl Kortum, he told me of his efforts on behalf of one of our most respected and talented friends, Capt. Fred K. Klebingat. Fred is one of those rare original people, in his case a product of the sea and ships. Few remain from his most important decades. He recently celebrated his 90th birthday and still is going strong. Among his considerable abilities, he writes, and writes well. Enclosed is an example, which we published. These are true stories and, not unimportant, required only light editing. Fred is an endless source of information and documentation for maritime historians world-wide. If we had them, he would be among our Living National Treasures.

Karl has been working with people at the National Geographic about the possibility of them publishing some of his stories. In our discussions, we saw suddenly the unique experience of the Geographic covering him returning to his old ship, the FALLS OF CLYDE, this year celebrating her centennial ~~year~~, and Fred not far behind. As you saw when here, the jigger remains to be rigged and and there are infinite details for which we need his expertise, in his role as Chief Technical Advisor. It would make a marvelous story and could be done in that splendid style of the Geographic. Could I ask you to suggest and support this idea with Gilbert Grosvenor? There is not much time in the future to do it, and I believe it has solid merit. I would appreciate your reaction and ideas, as well as suggestions...soon, if possible. Call collect to Karl or me.

Meanwhile, with every best wish to you both for the New Year and warmest wishes from Hawaii,

cc:K.Kortum

Aloha,

John C. Wright

IRVING M. JOHNSON
123 HOCKANUM ROAD
HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS 01035

January 9, 1980.

18 JAN 1980

Mr. John Wright,
Bishop Museum,
Honolulu, HI 96819

Dear John:

It sure is too bad you are almost on the other side of the world as we have so much in common to yarn about. I think your work for the FALLS OF CLYDE has now finally been realized to be the outstanding factor between complete loss and her wonderful restoration.

Karl Kortum has got me all fired up over Capt. Klebingat's place in the squarerigger world. I hadn't realized he was still active and mentally alert to such a remarkable degree. In beating on the Geographic people about their forthcoming book about ships and the sea I found that in that department they are nowhere near as flexible as they used to be in picking up an idea whose time has come. I am cudgeling my brains to think of some suitable person who could pick up this marvelous opportunity and run with it.

Karl has recently brought me up to date with a mass of concentrated ship lore gleaned from Capt. Klebingat and others in the last quarter century. Exy and I do not have the ability to handle this material properly nor at this stage of the game are we enlisting in new causes. However, I have a few ideas as to who might handle it and will keep trying.

The book you sent, "Christmas at Sea" has been devoured by us and various friends. I would really like to know whether we can order additional copies for friends. I didn't even know the book existed.

There is just a chance we might be going through Honolulu next winter and will surely look you up if you are not on the other side of the world.

Exy joins in our thanks for the book and all good wishes to you.

Regards,

Irving